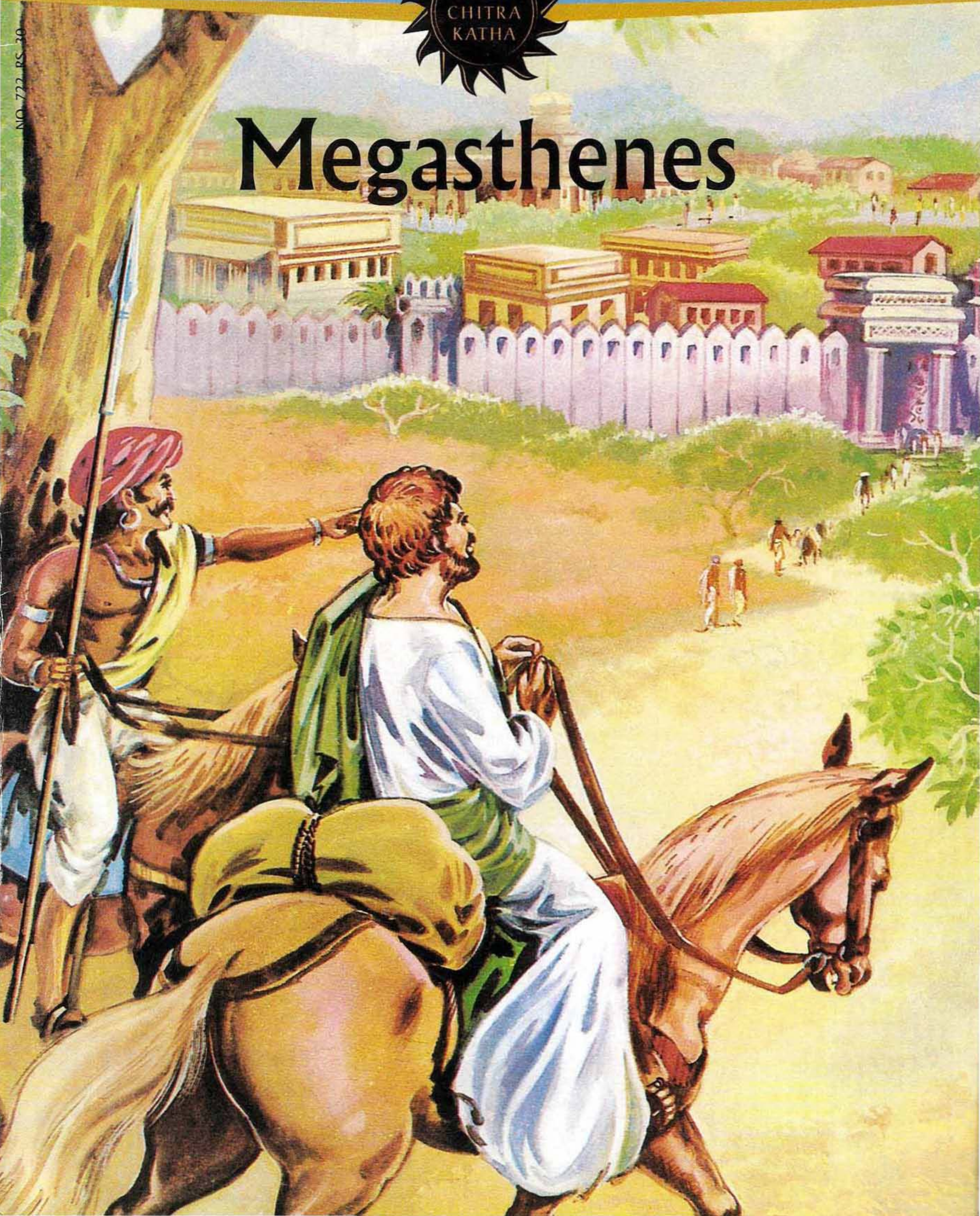




Megasthenes

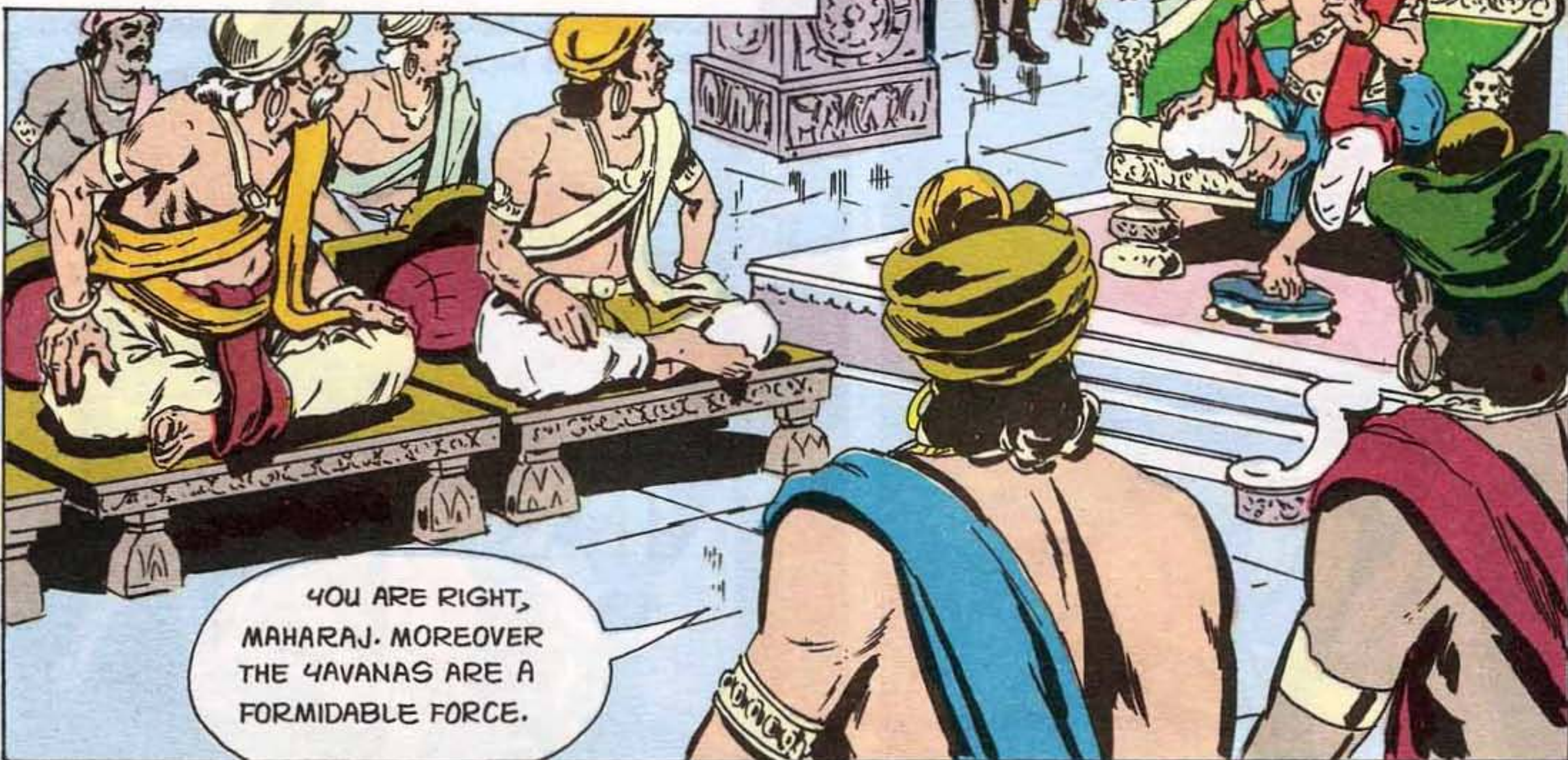
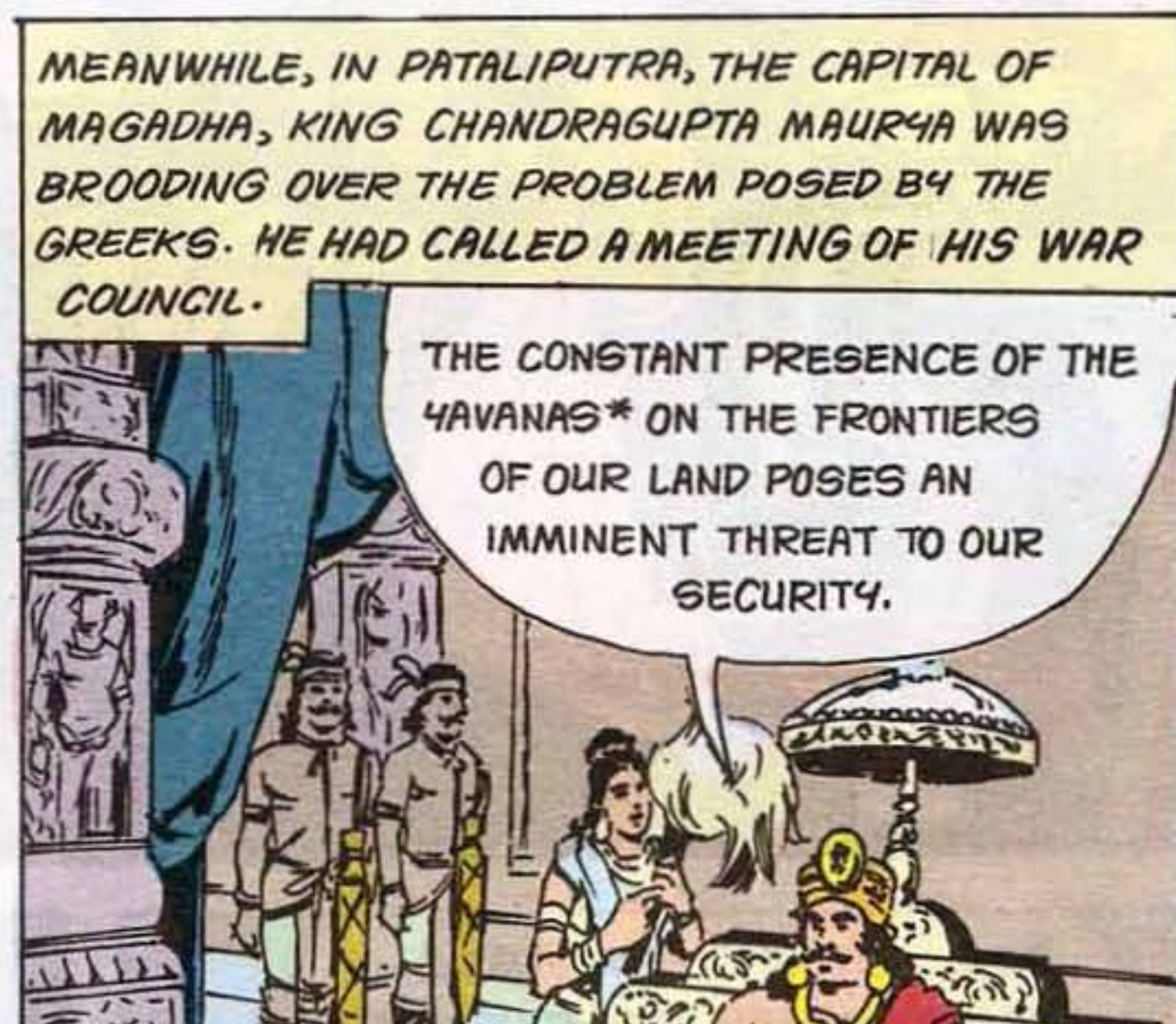
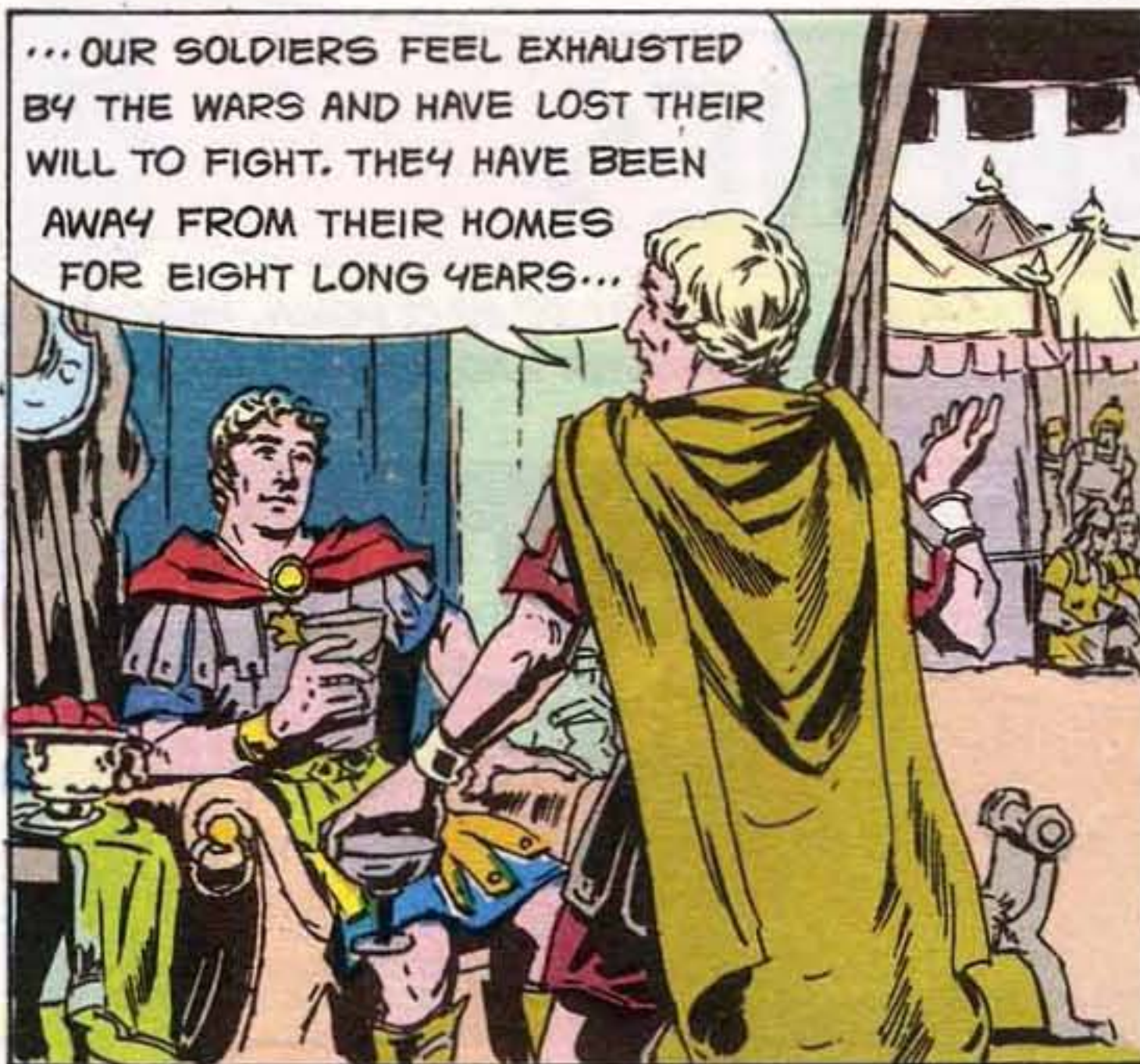


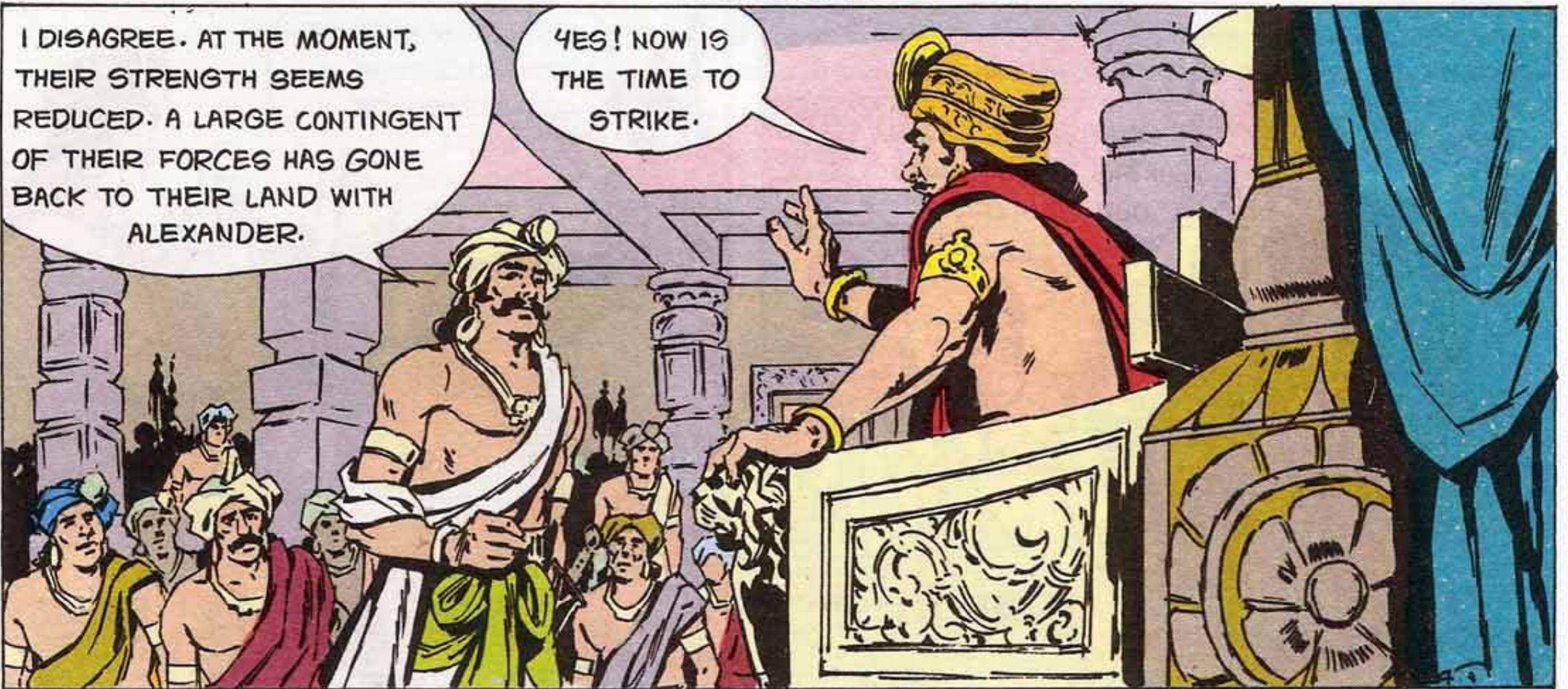
NO. 722 RS. 30

MEGASTHENES

AFTER HIS LONG AND ARDUOUS CAMPAIGN IN PERSIA, ALEXANDER THE GREAT OF MACEDONIA, REACHED THE NORTH-WESTERN FRONTIER OF INDIA IN 326 B.C. HE DEFEATED PAURAVA AND WAS FILLED WITH CONFIDENCE ABOUT HIS MILITARY PROWESS.







SOME TIME LATER, IN THE GREEK DOMAIN—



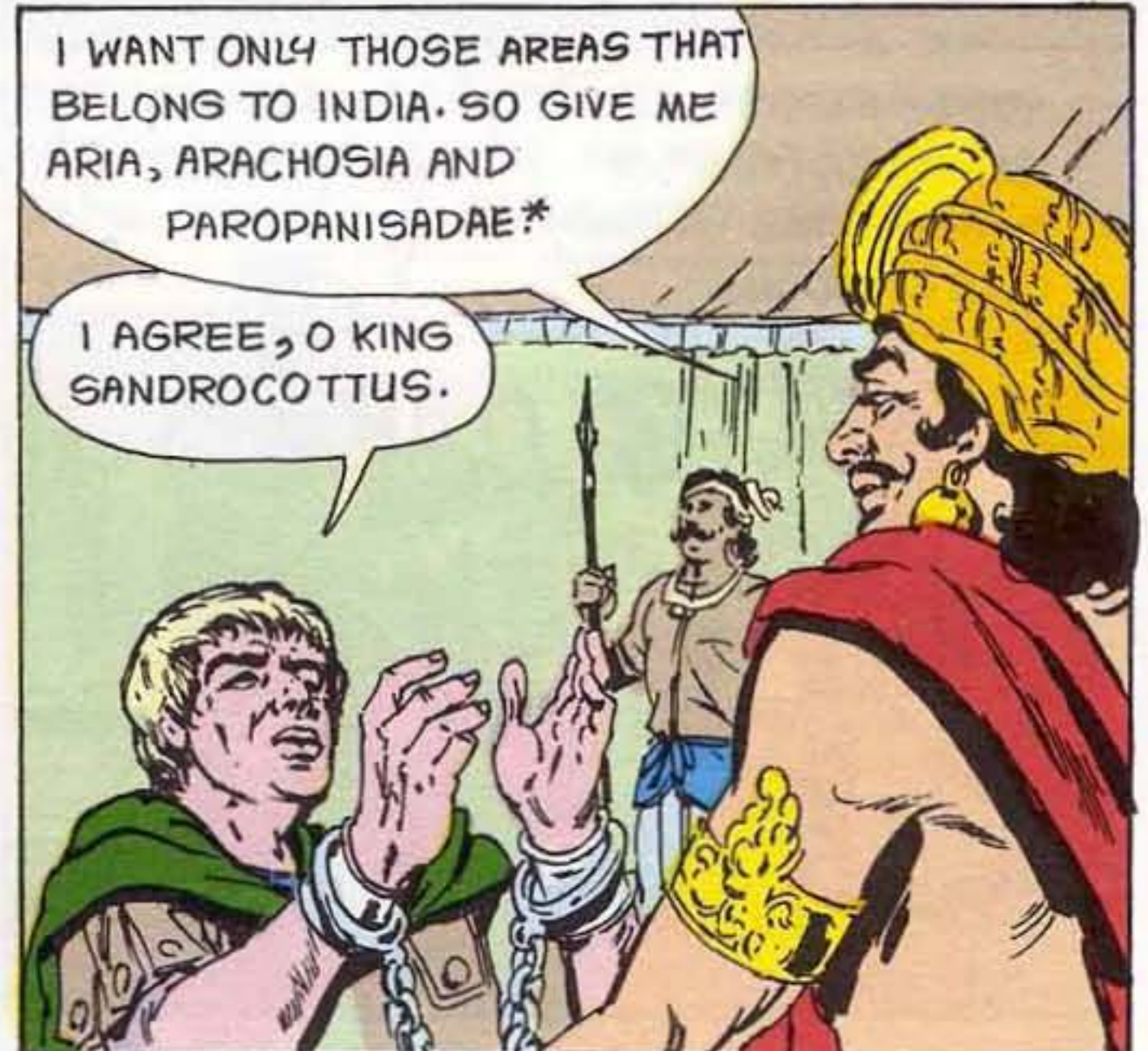
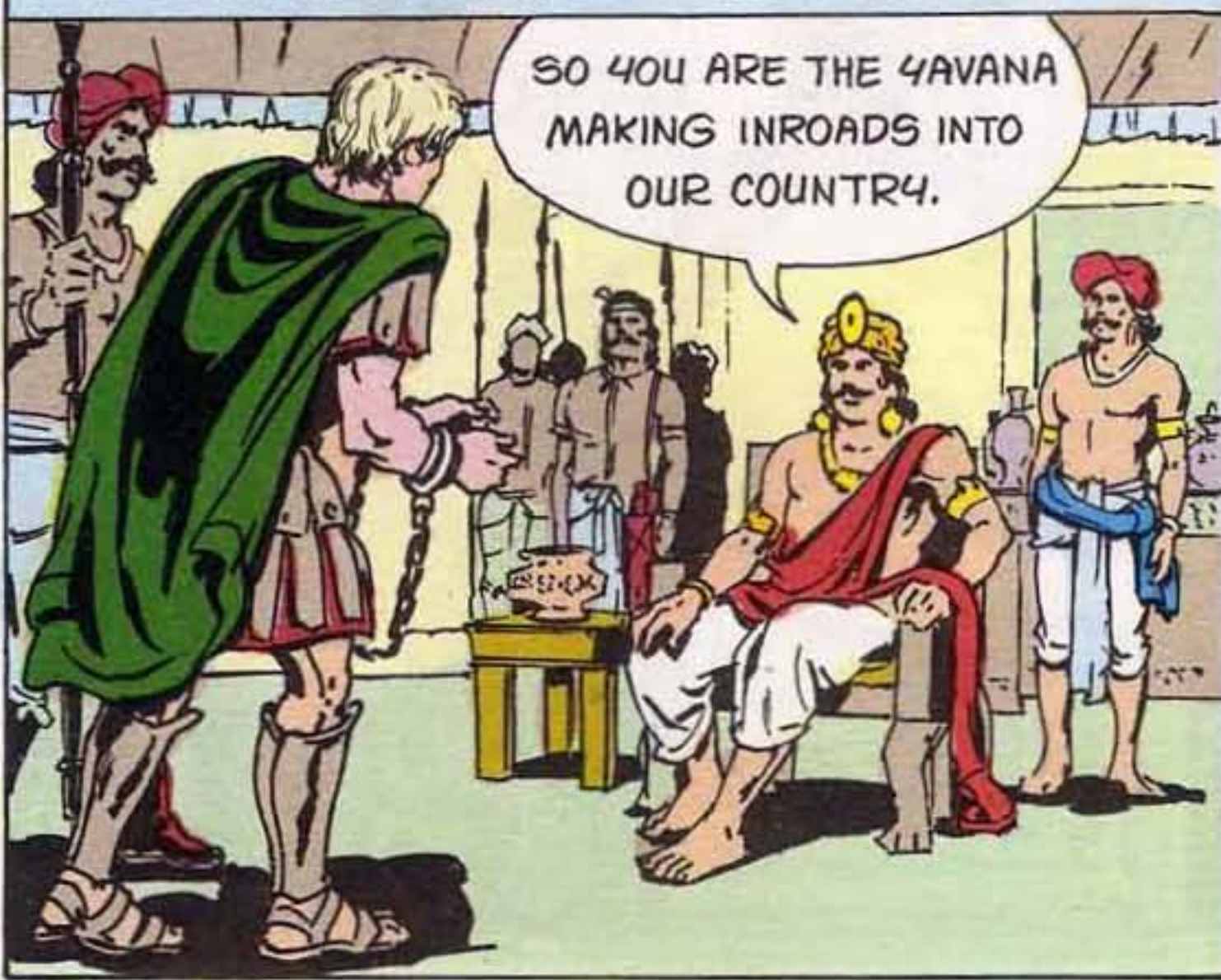
IN THE ENSUING WAR, HOWEVER, THE GREEKS WERE DEFEATED.



*GREEK NAME OF CHANDRAGUPTA

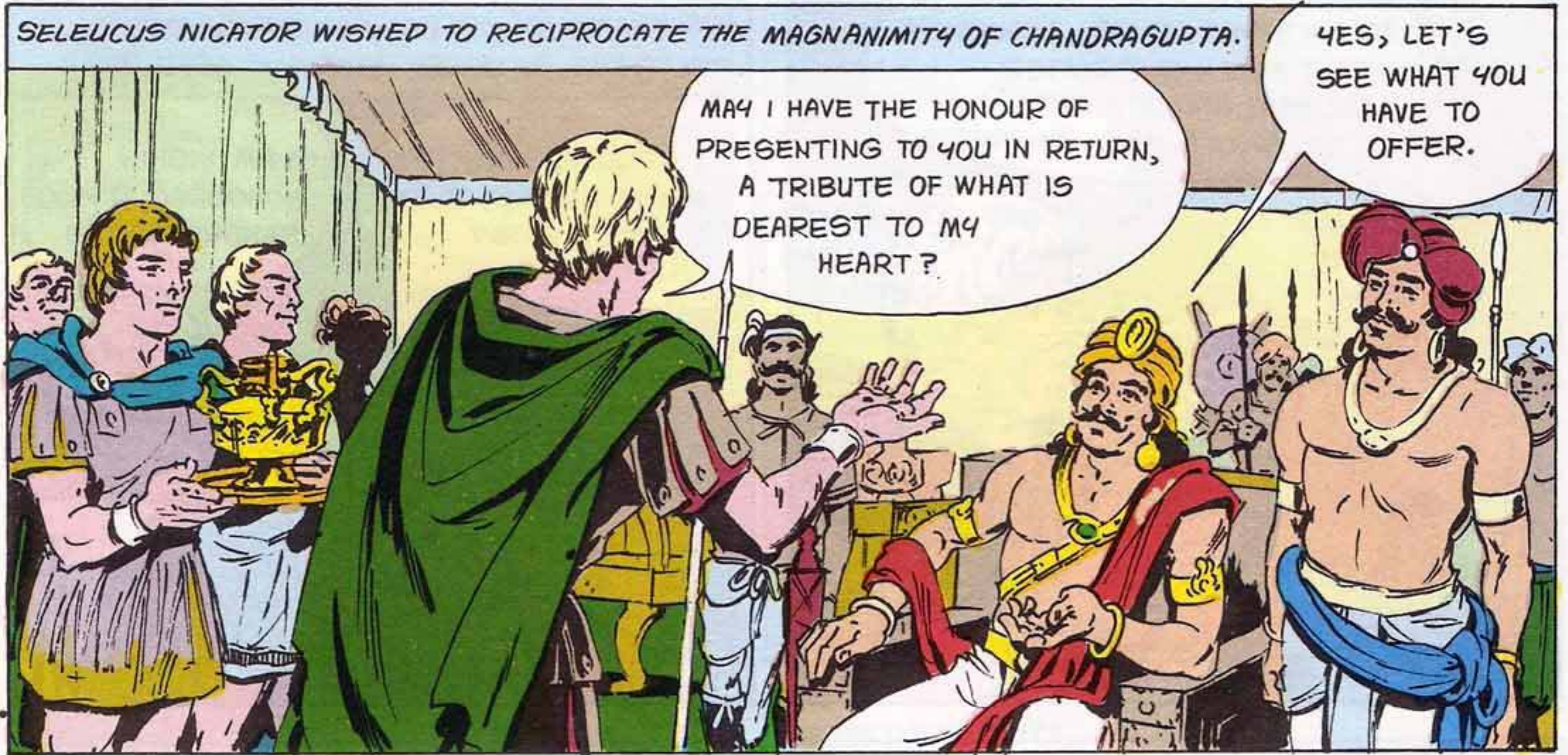
† SINDHU

SELEUCUS NICATOR WAS TAKEN CAPTIVE AND PRODUCED BEFORE CHANDRAGUPTA.

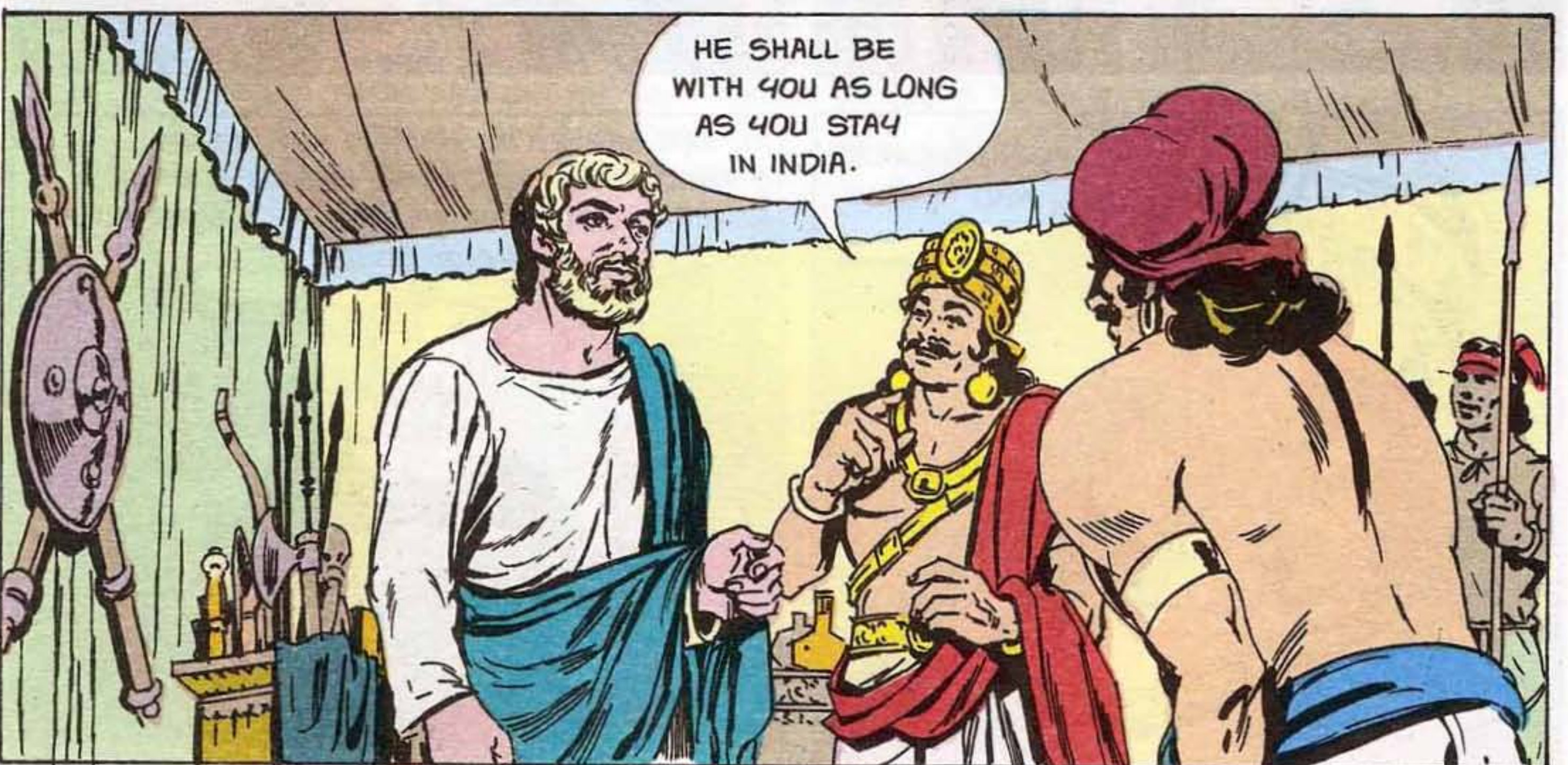
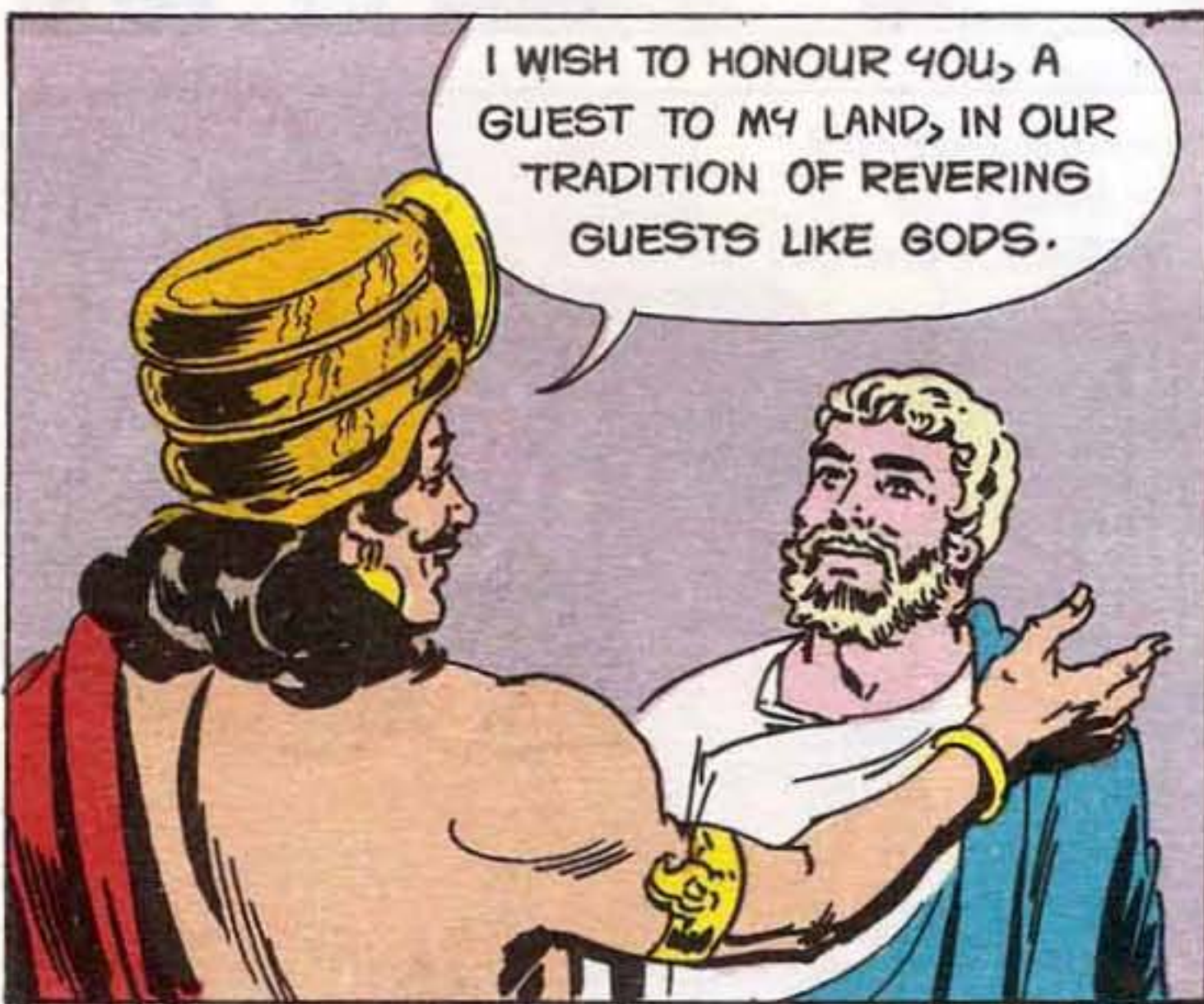
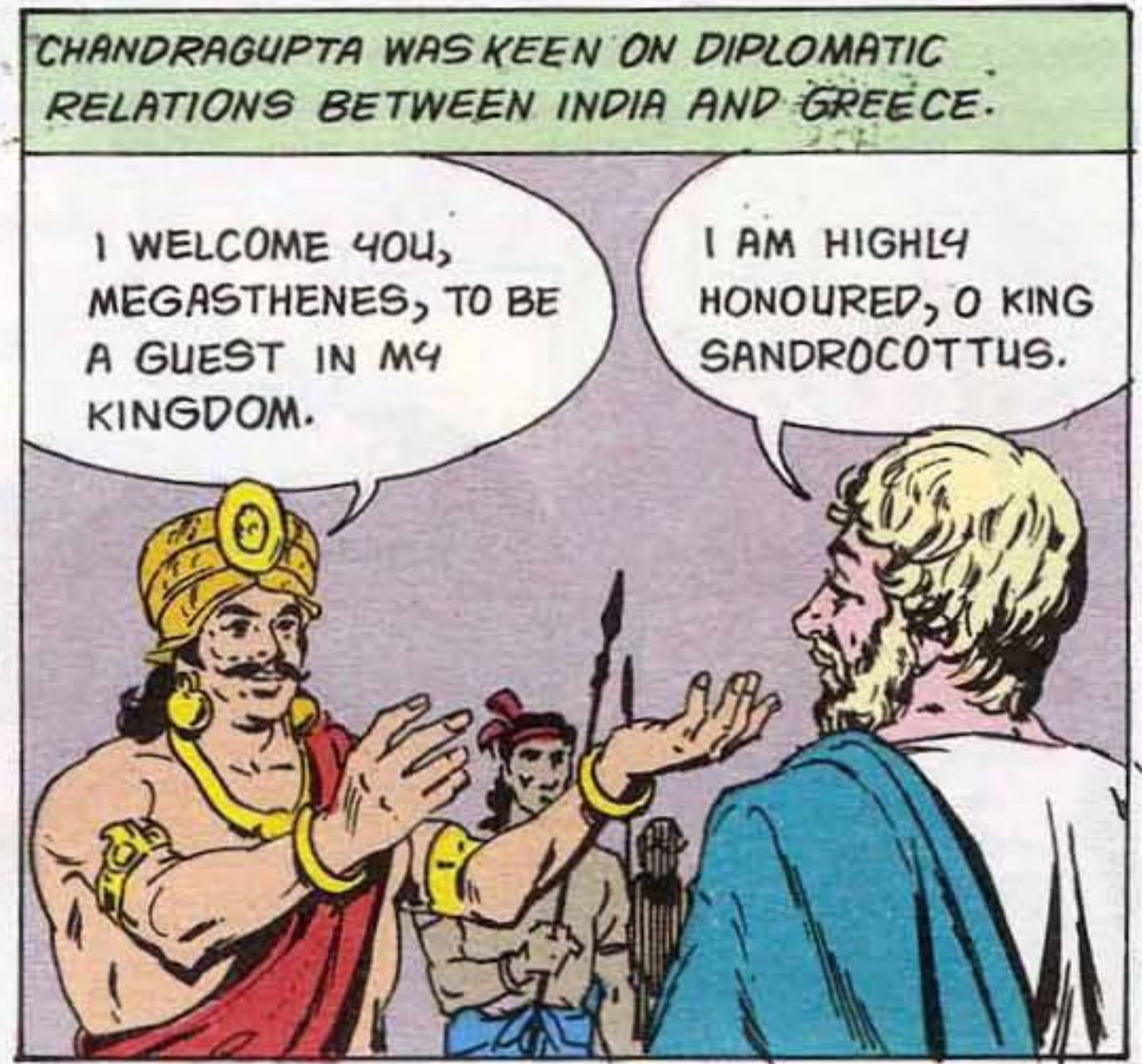


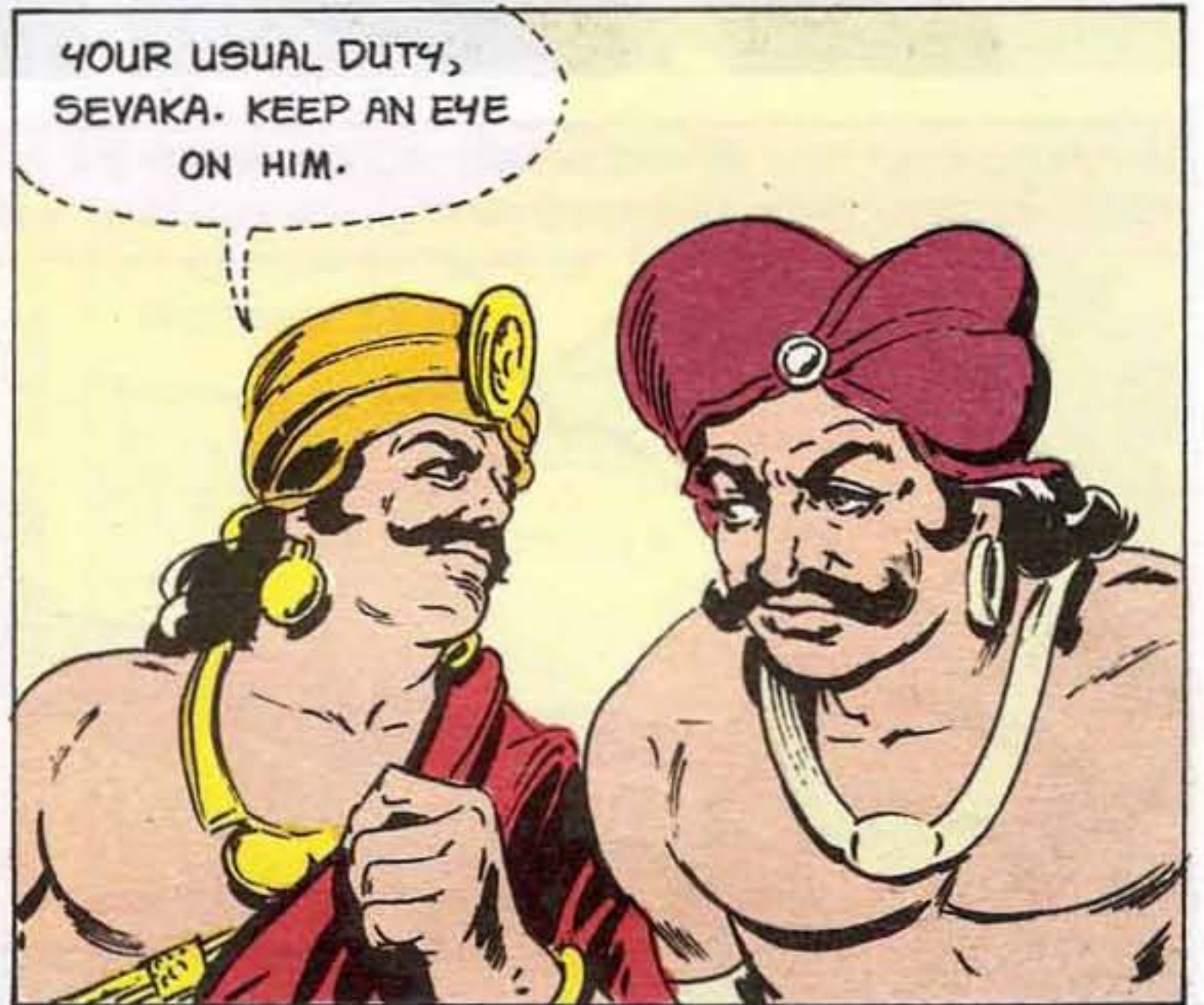
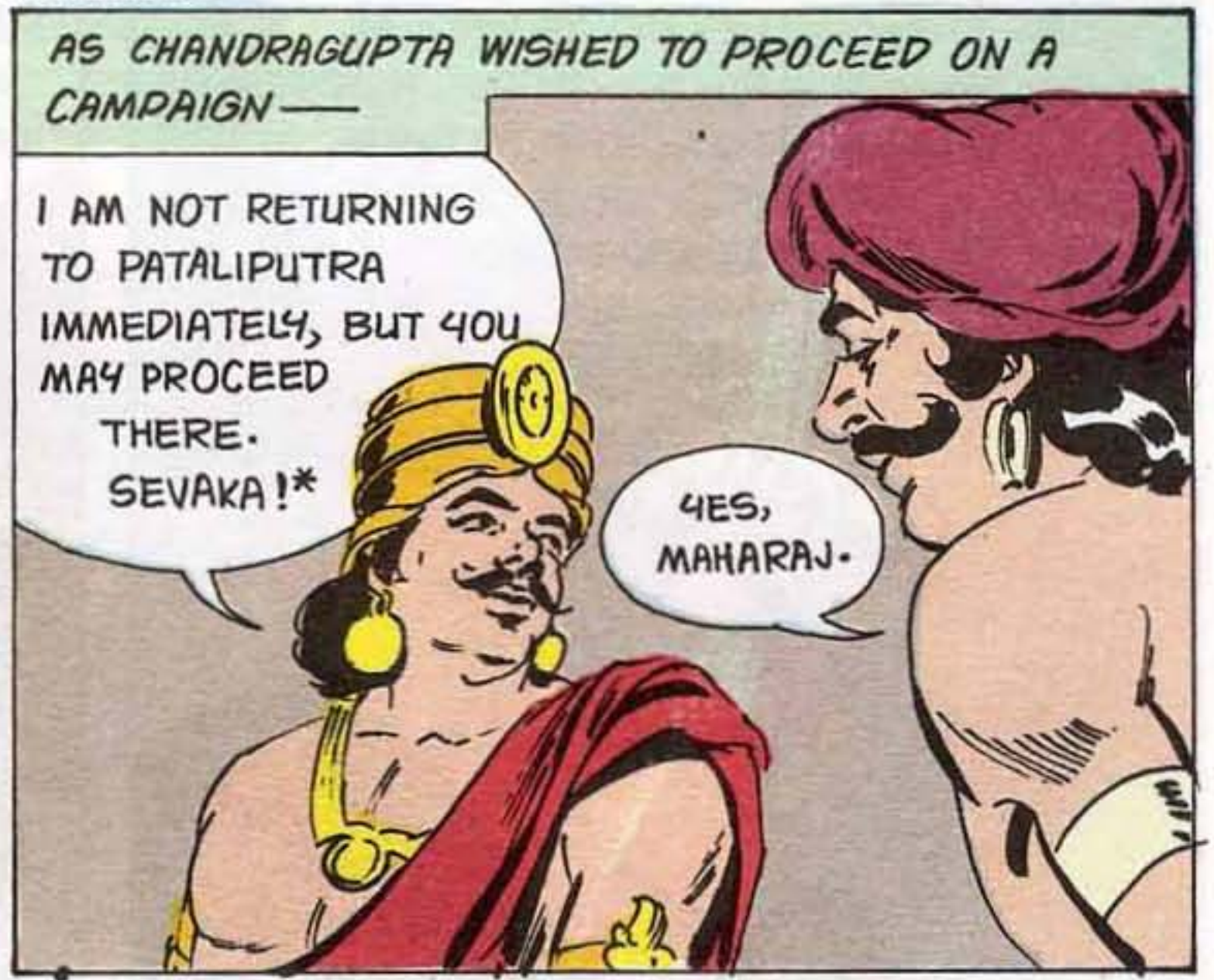
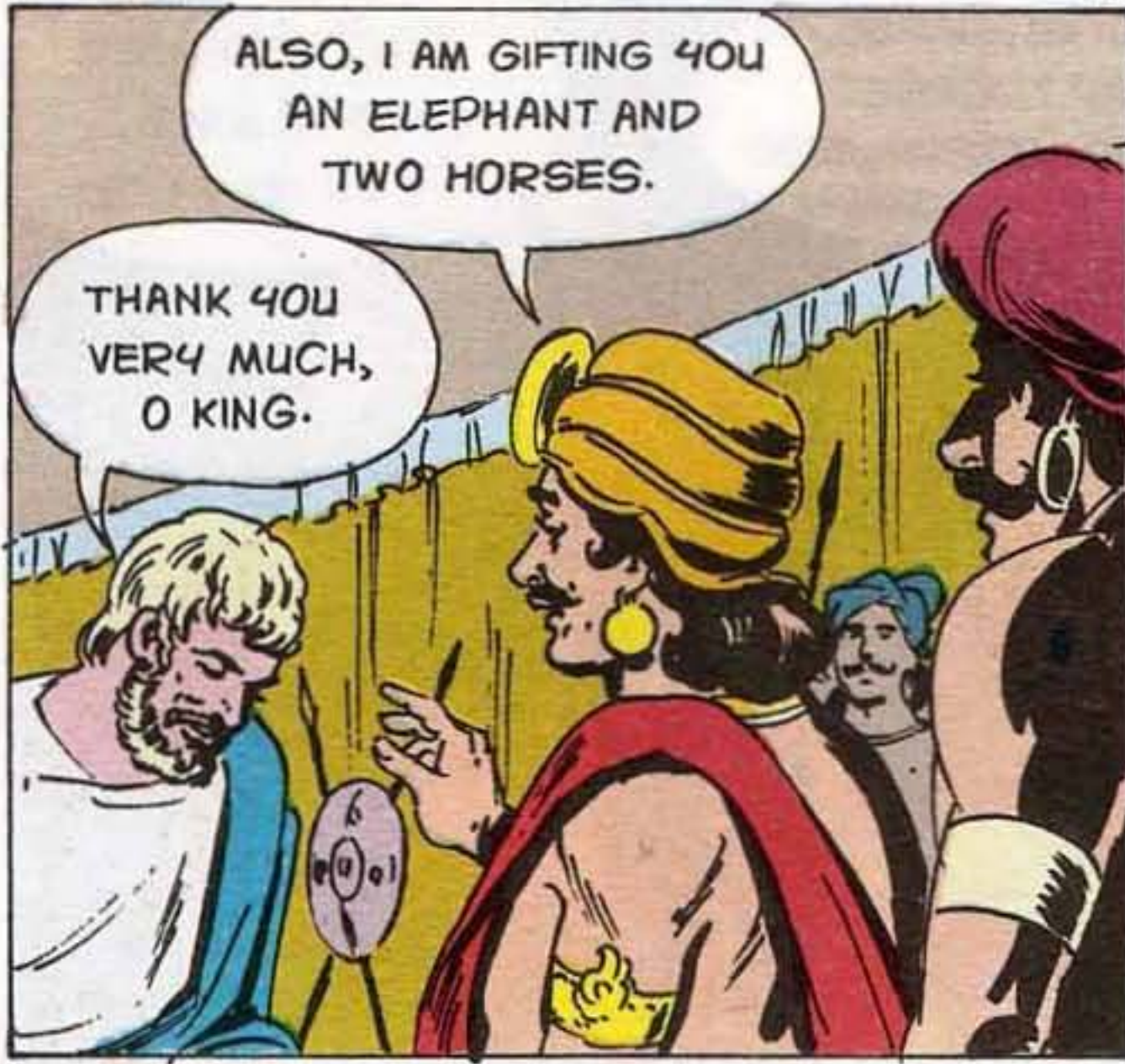
* PARTS OF PRESENT DAY PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

SELEUCUS NICATOR WISHED TO RECIPROCATE THE MAGNANIMITY OF CHANDRAGUPTA.



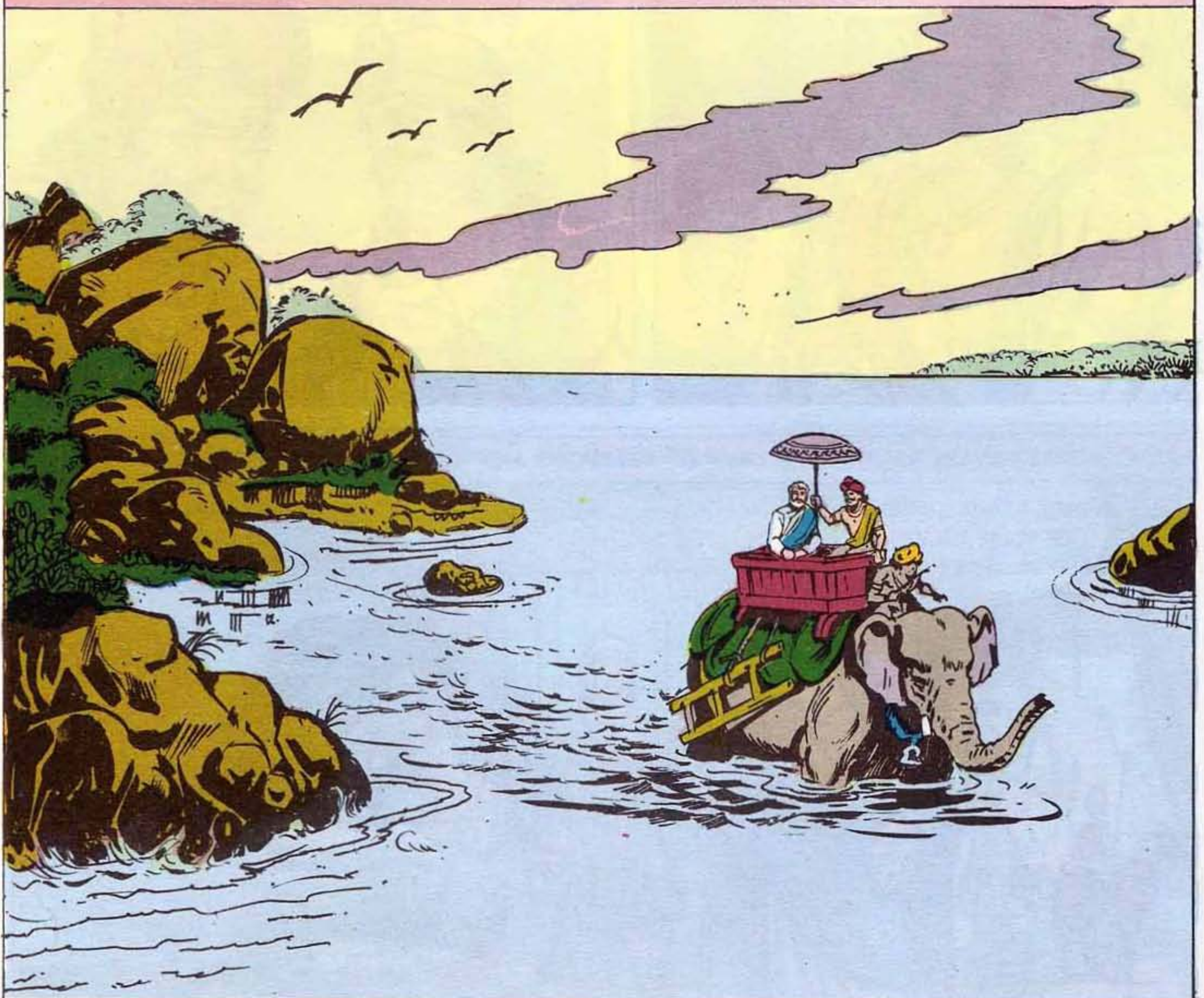
* ACCORDING TO LEGEND, THE DAUGHTER OF SELEUCUS





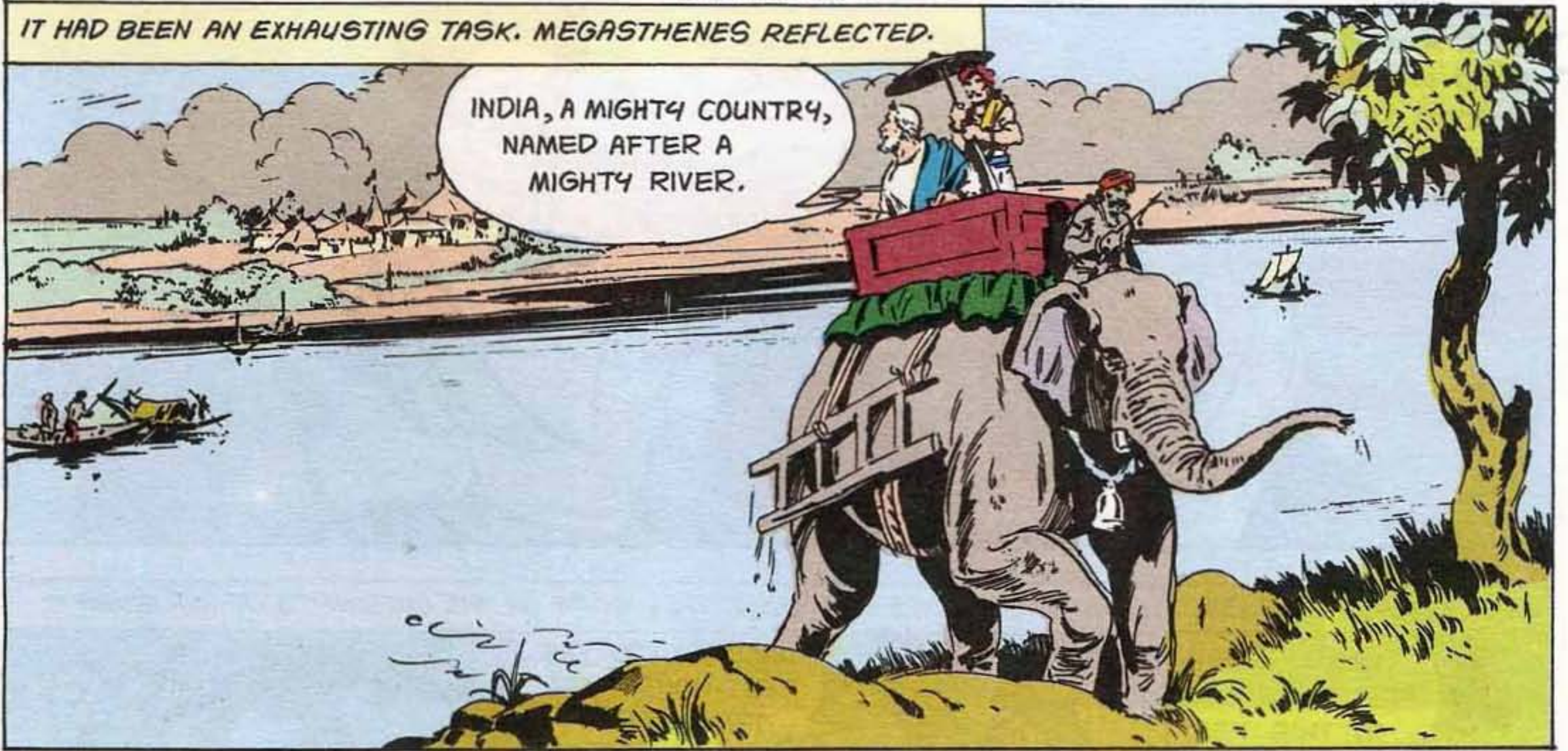


IN A FEW DAYS' TIME MEGASTHENES, ACCOMPANIED BY THE SERVANT, BEGAN HIS JOURNEY TOWARDS PATALIPUTRA. THEY CROSSED THE RIVER SINDHU WHERE IT WAS SHALLOW.



IT HAD BEEN AN EXHAUSTING TASK. MEGASTHENES REFLECTED.

INDIA, A MIGHTY COUNTRY,
NAMED AFTER A
MIGHTY RIVER.



I AM SURE YOU
WILL LIKE IT HERE,
SIR.

I ALREADY DO. KING
SANDROCOTTUS HAS
BEEN VERY KIND
TO ME.



INDEED, SIR. HE HAS
GIFTED YOU ANIMALS
NO CITIZEN IN INDIA IS
ALLOWED TO OWN.

REALLY?



MEGASTHENES PREFERRED TO USE THE HORSES
TO THE ELEPHANT DURING HIS TRAVELS.

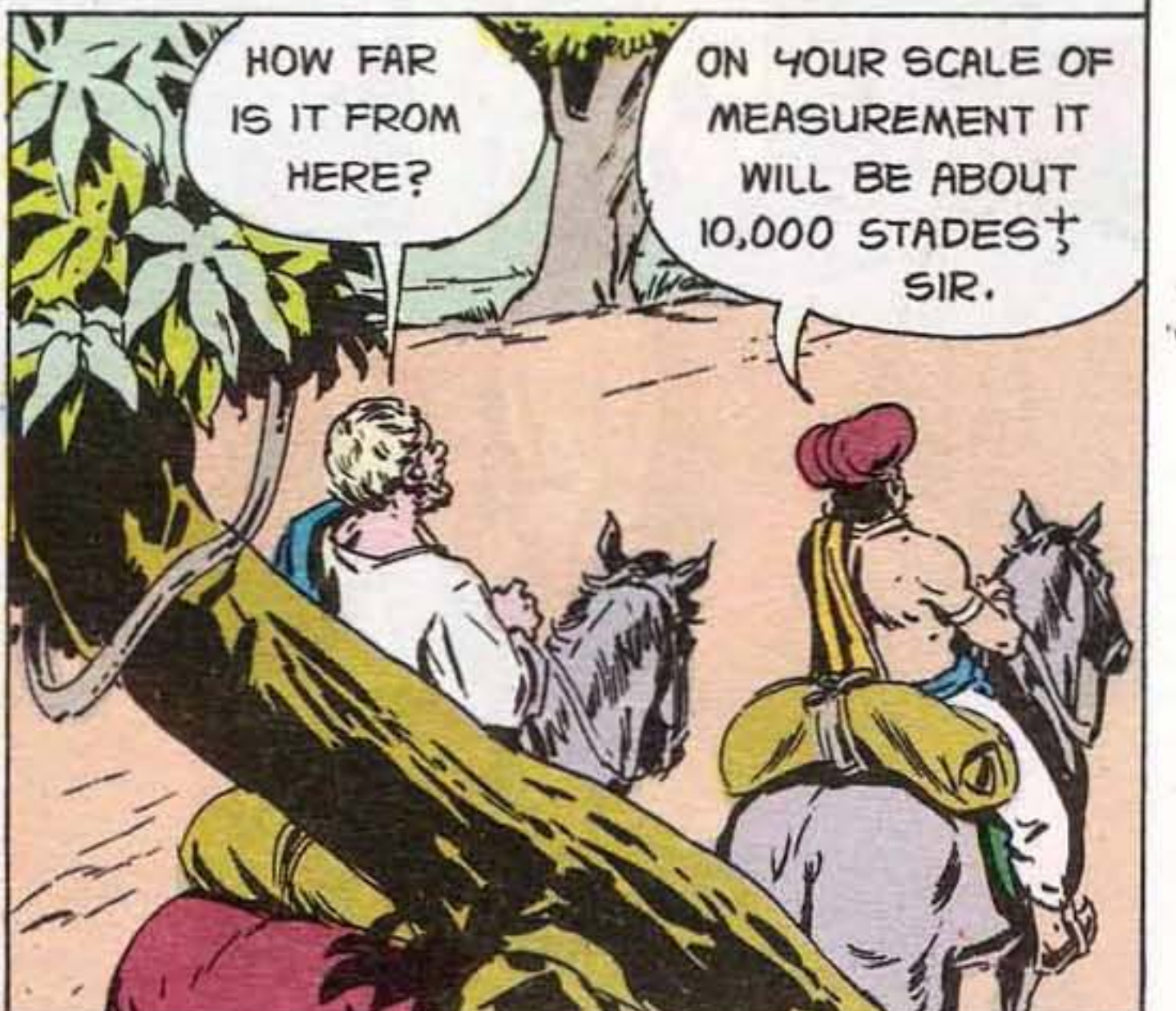
I AM EXCITED AT THE
THOUGHT OF VISITING
PALIBOTHTHA.* IT MUST
BE A BIG CITY.

IT IS.



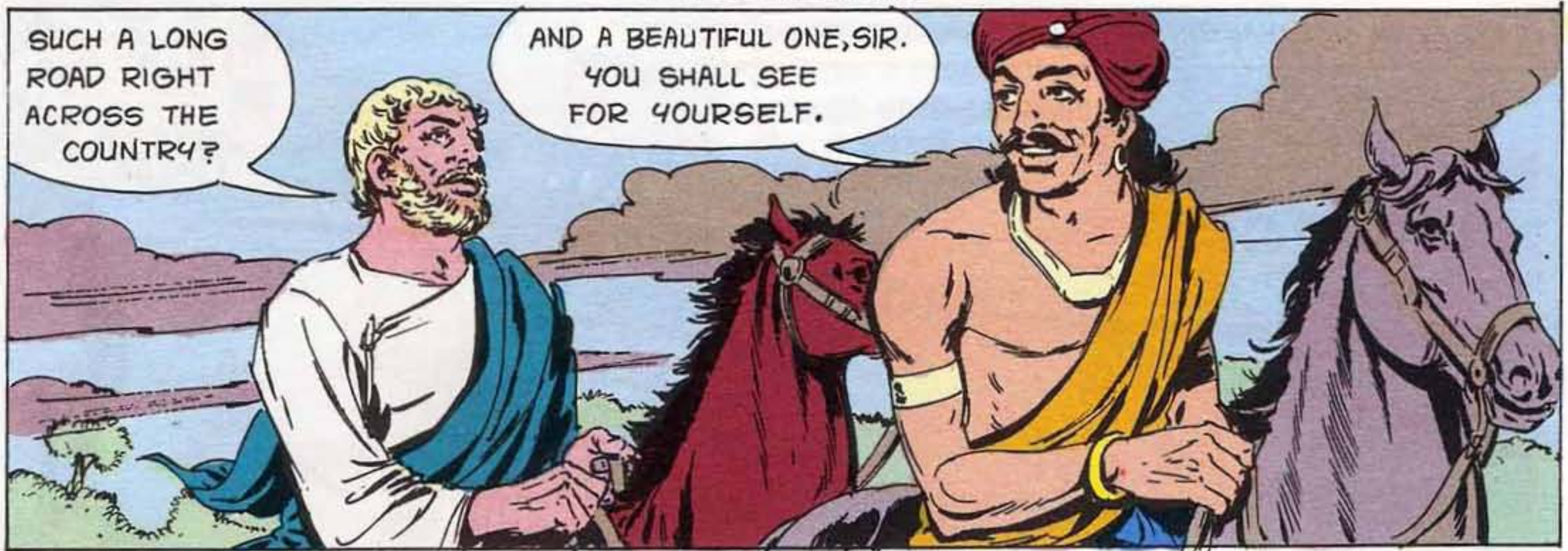
HOW FAR
IS IT FROM
HERE?

ON YOUR SCALE OF
MEASUREMENT IT
WILL BE ABOUT
10,000 STADES†
SIR.

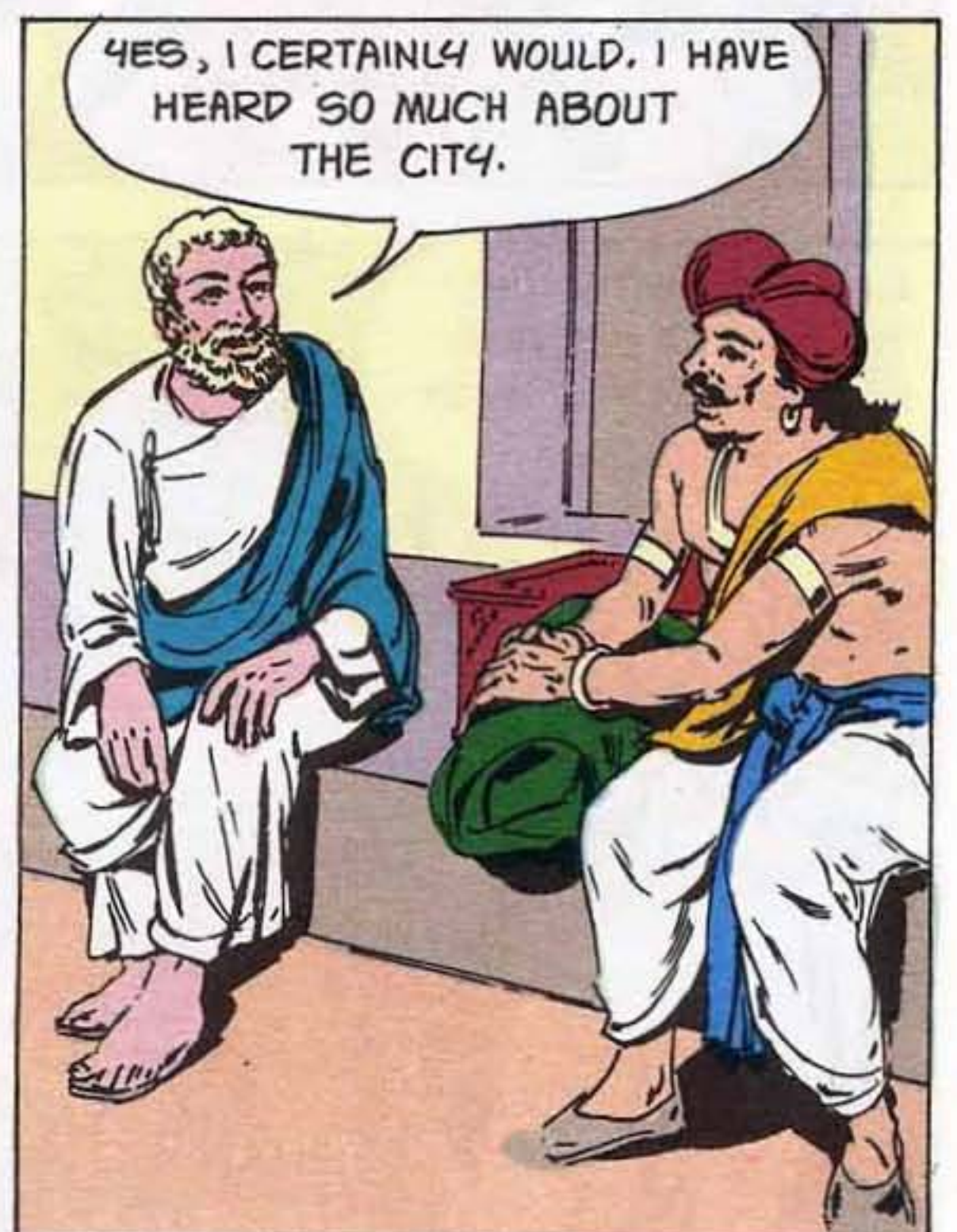
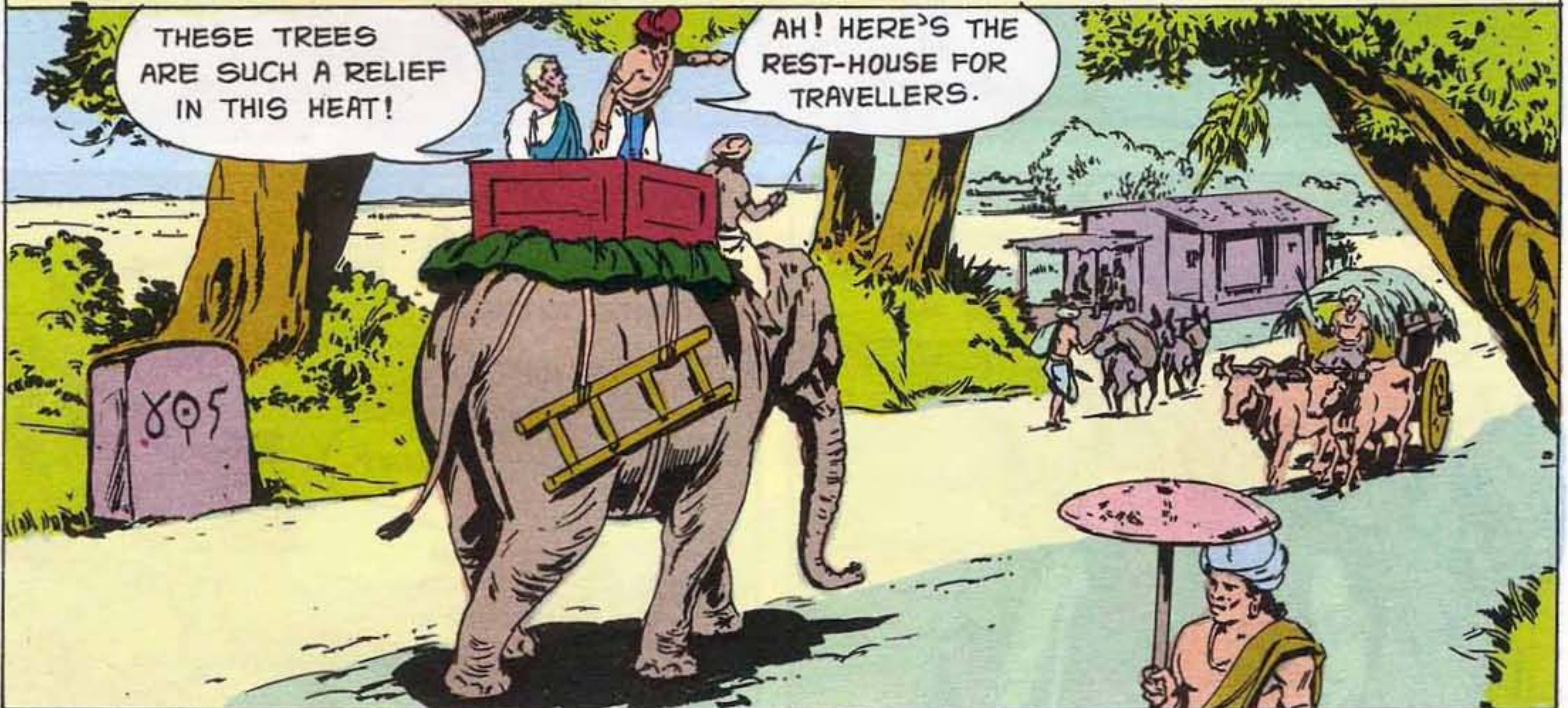


* GREEK FOR PATALIPUTRA.

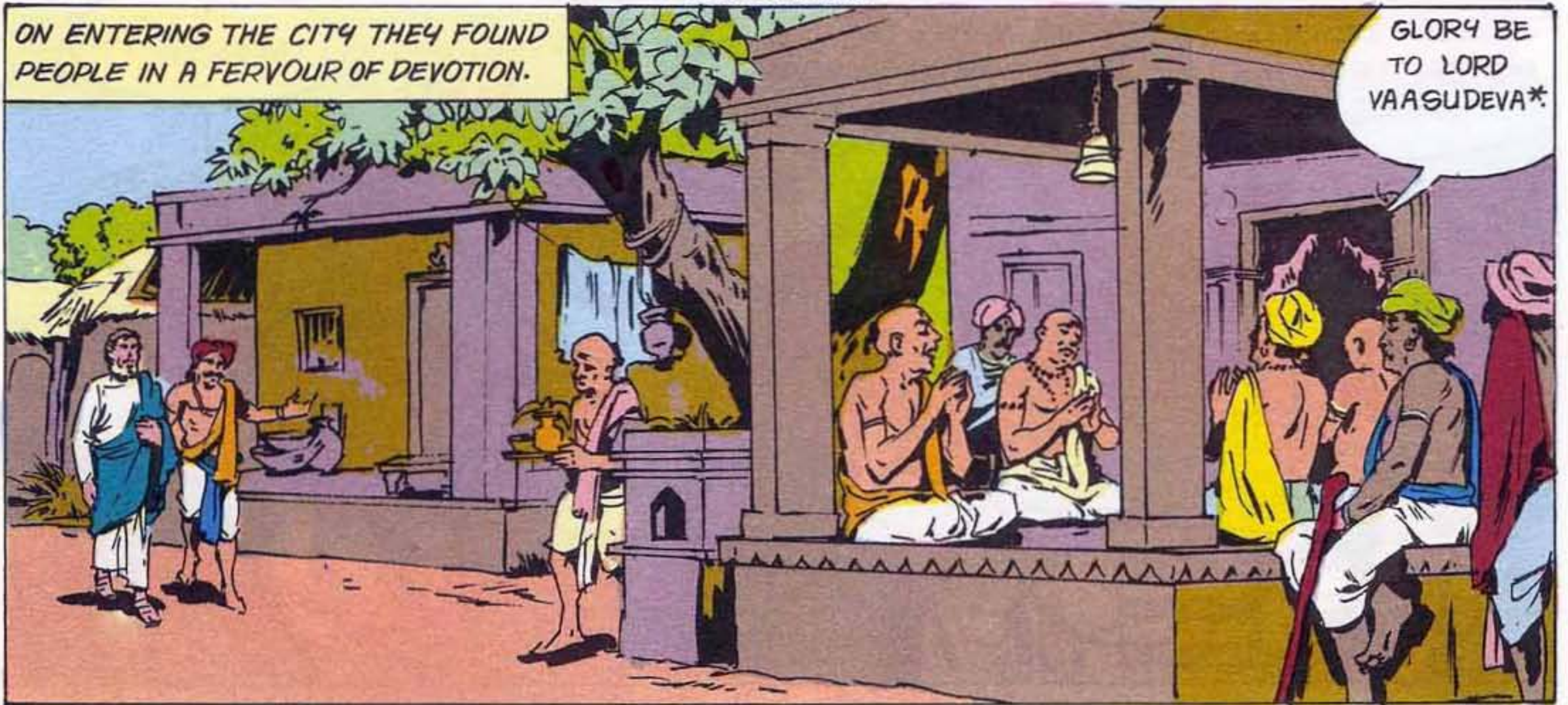
† 10,000 STADES ARE EQUAL TO ABOUT 1800 KM.



THE JOURNEY TO PATALIPUTRA WAS A LONG ONE. WHEN THEY WERE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF MATHURA —

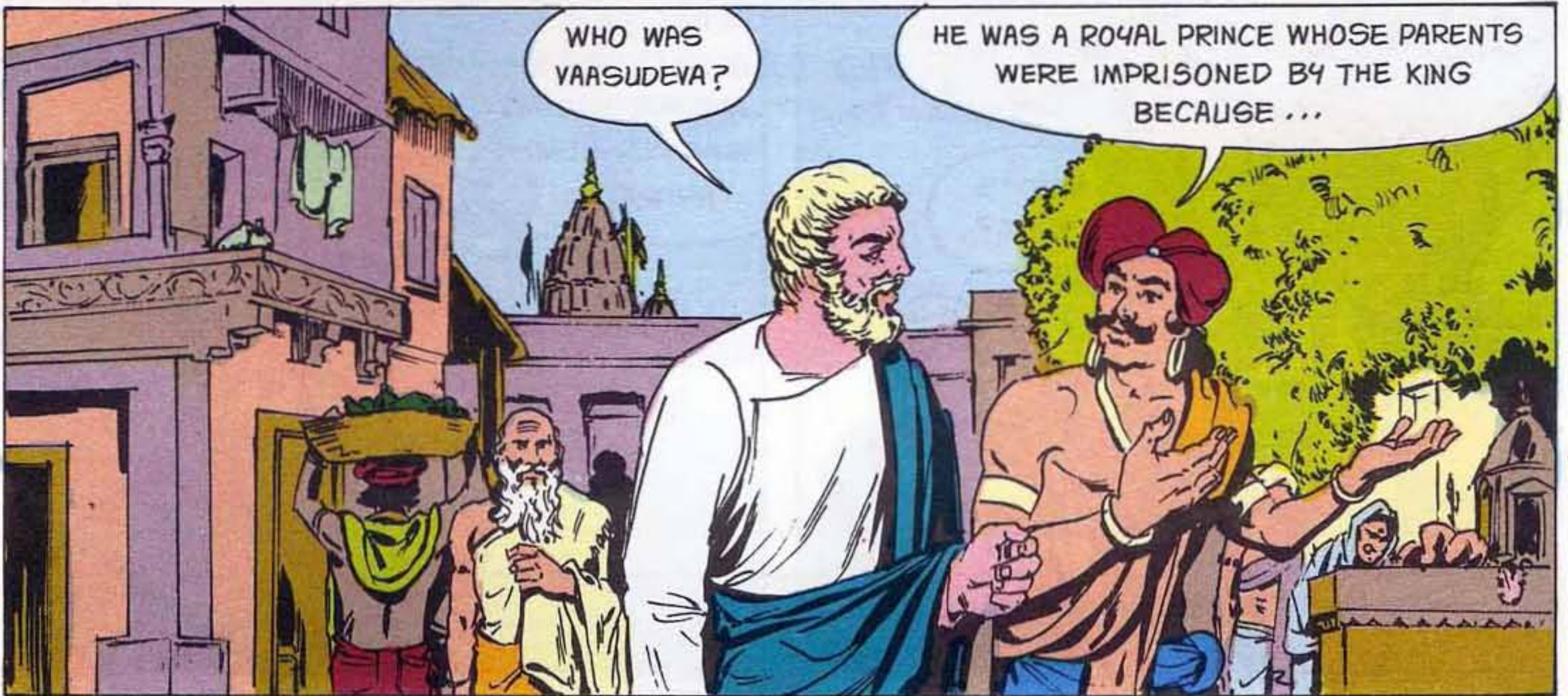


ON ENTERING THE CITY THEY FOUND
PEOPLE IN A FERVOUR OF DEVOTION.



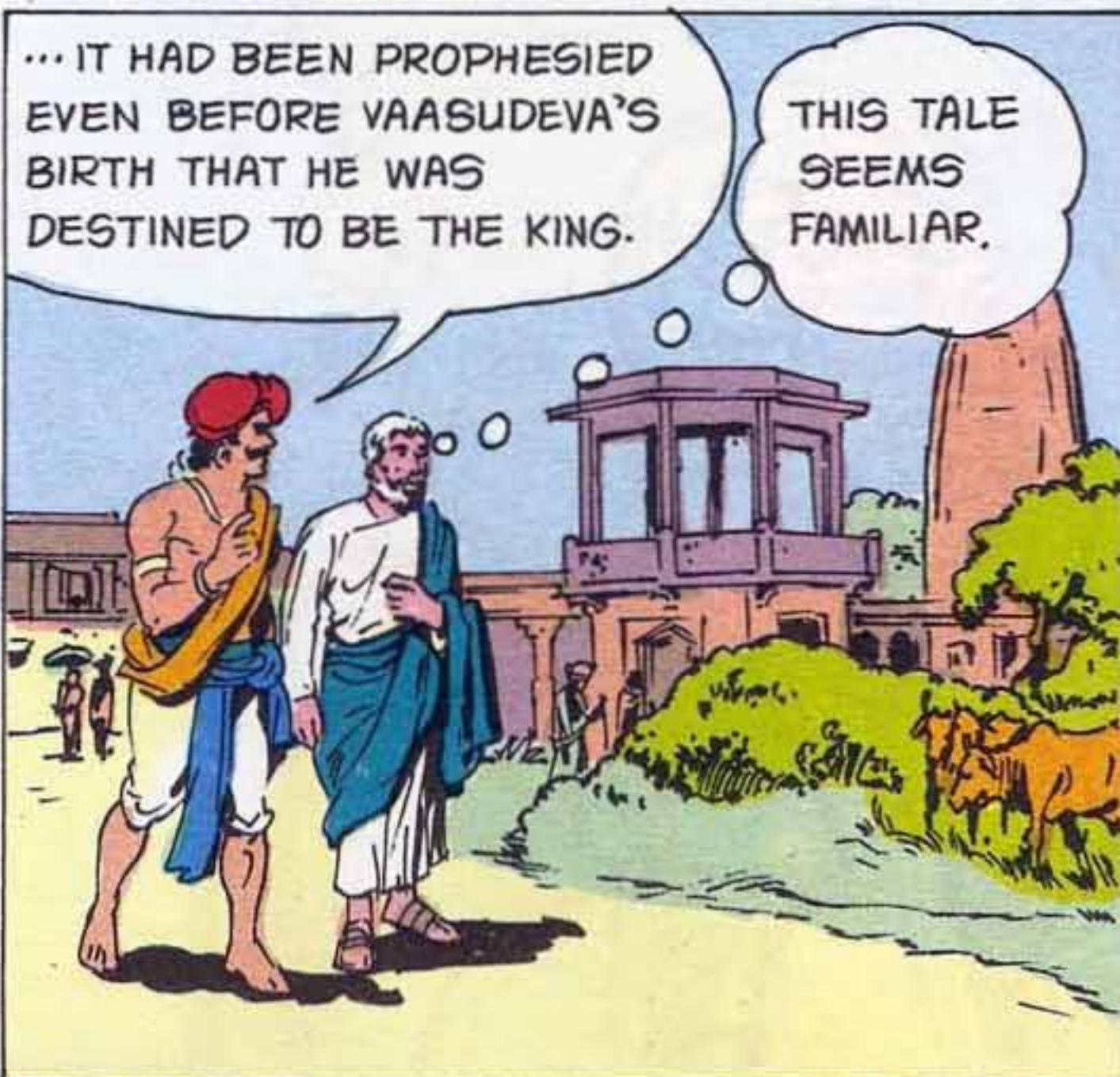
WHO WAS
VAASUDEVA?

HE WAS A ROYAL PRINCE WHOSE PARENTS
WERE IMPRISONED BY THE KING
BECAUSE ...



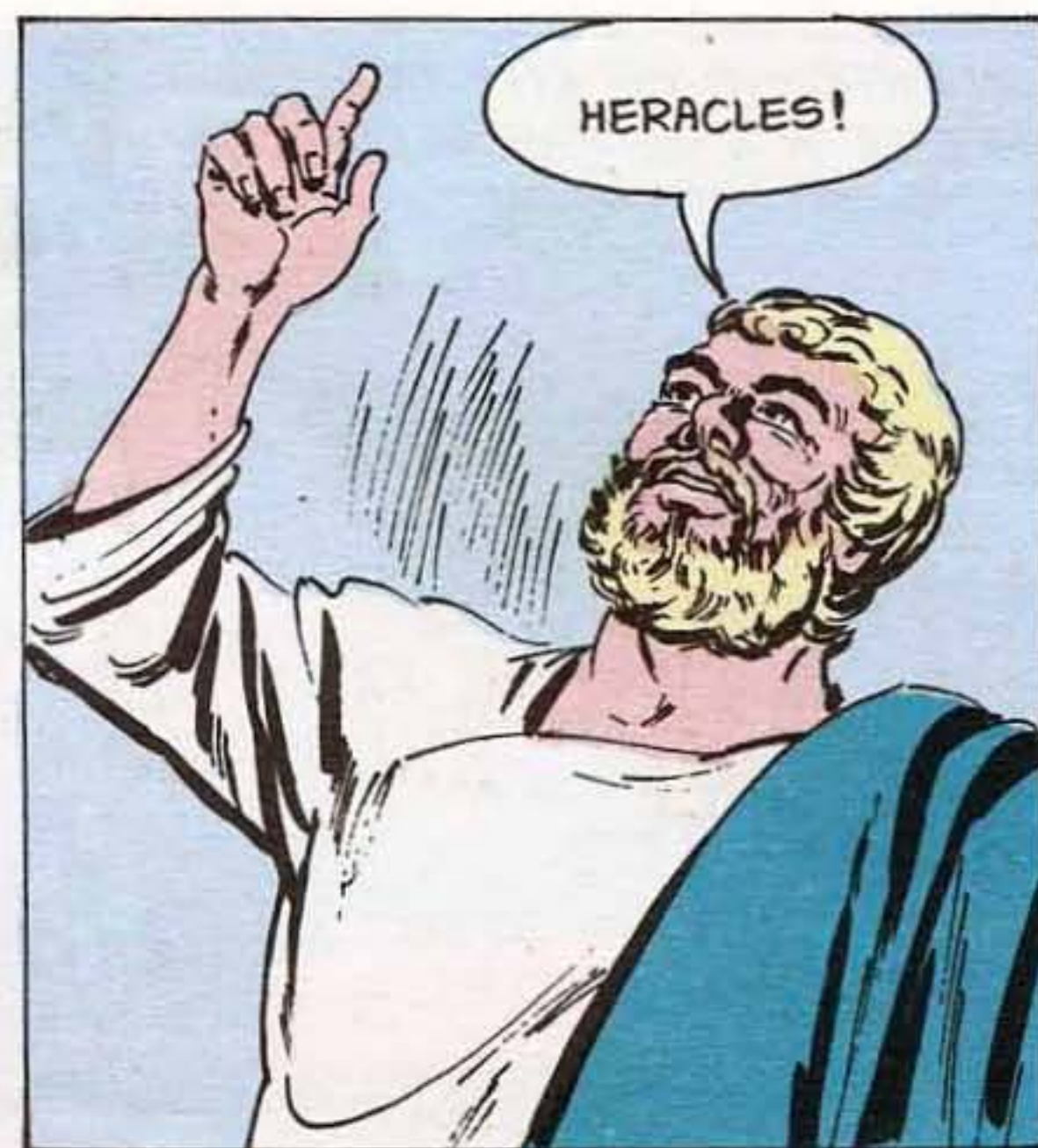
... IT HAD BEEN PROPHESED
EVEN BEFORE VAASUDEVA'S
BIRTH THAT HE WAS
DESTINED TO BE THE KING.

THIS TALE
SEEMS
FAMILIAR.

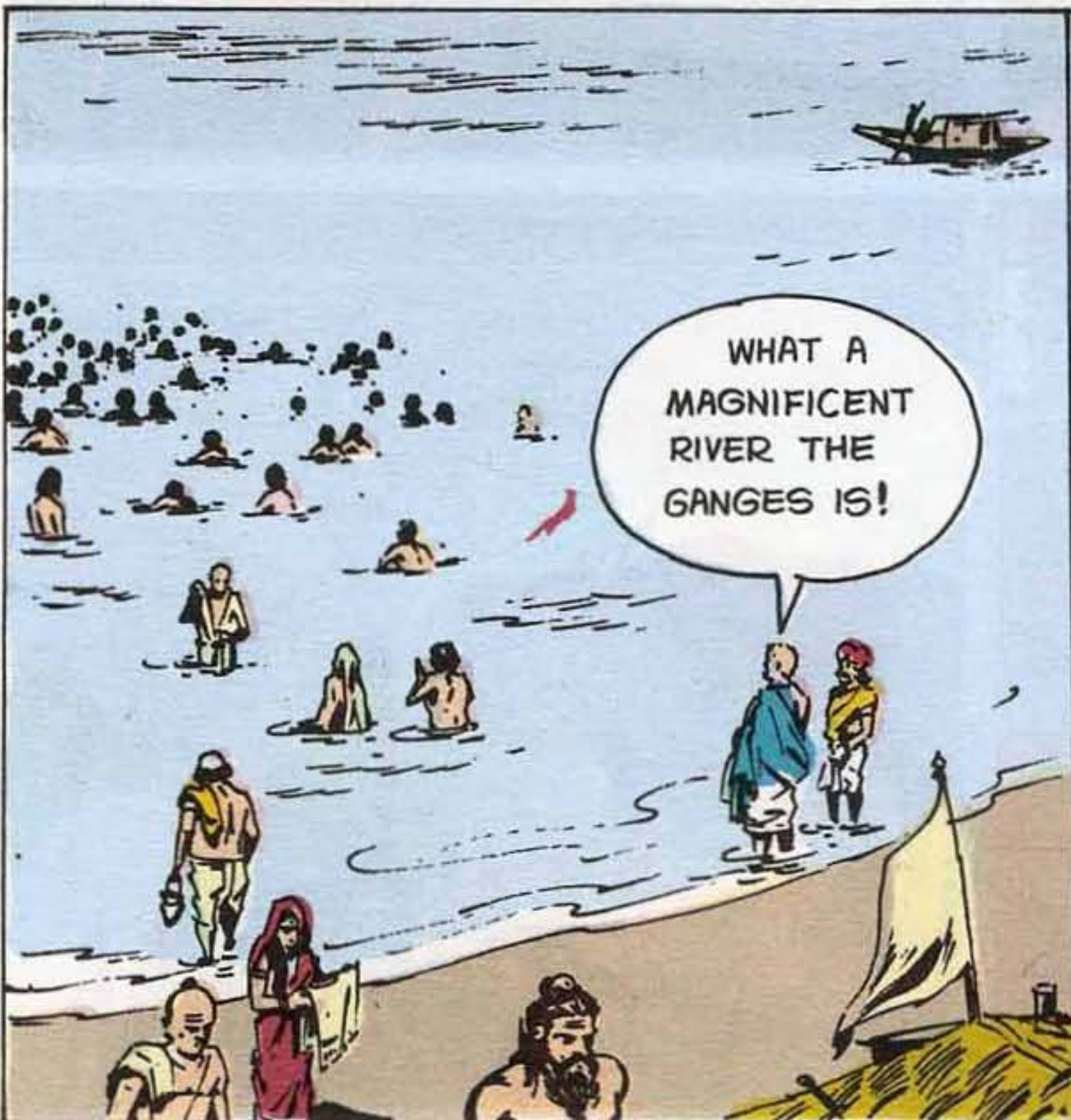
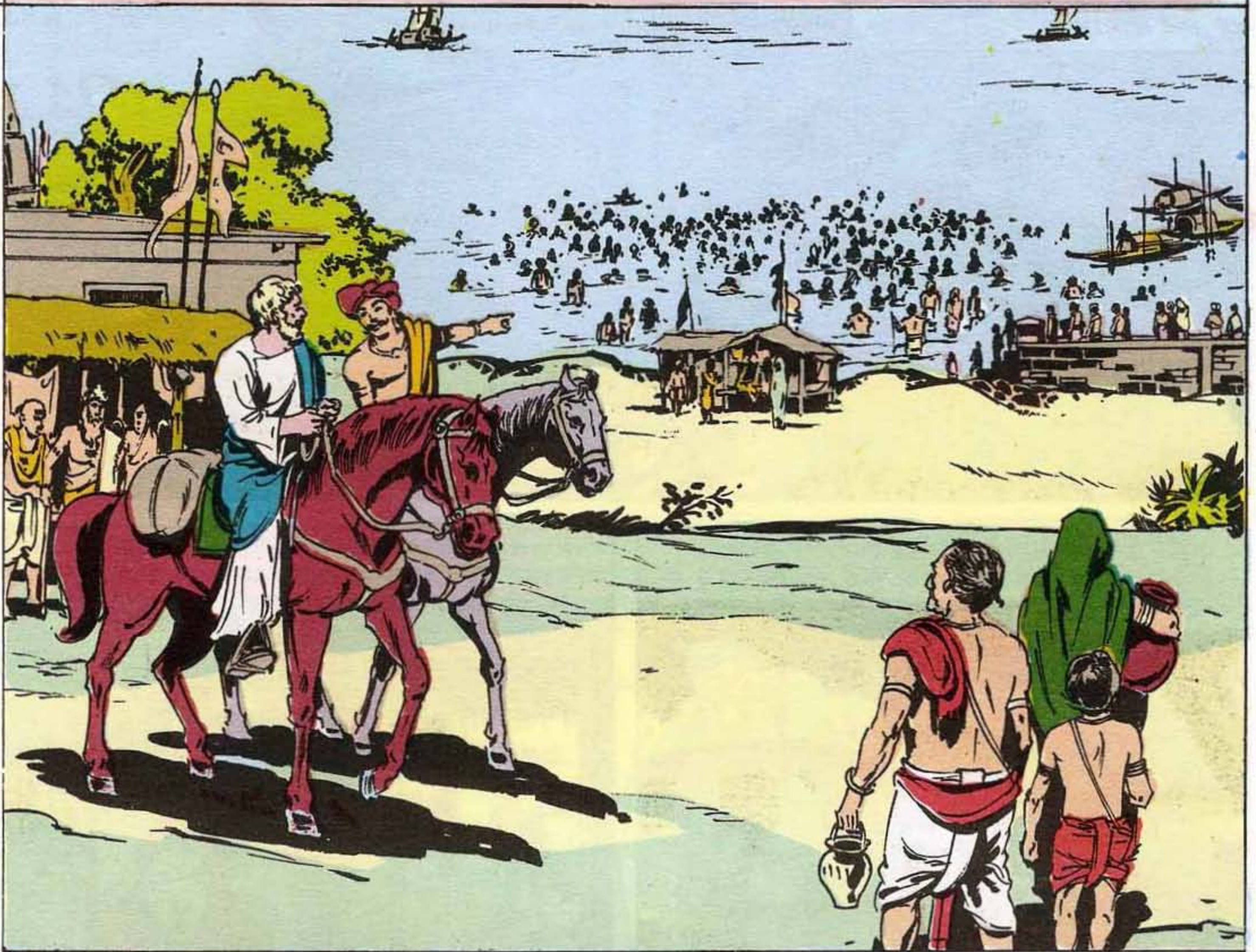


VAASUDEVA GREW UP
AMONG VILLAGERS,
AND WITH GREAT
VALOUR...





AFTER TRAVELLING FOR MANY WEEKS BY ROAD, THEY REACHED PRAYAGA.*



*ALLAHABAD.

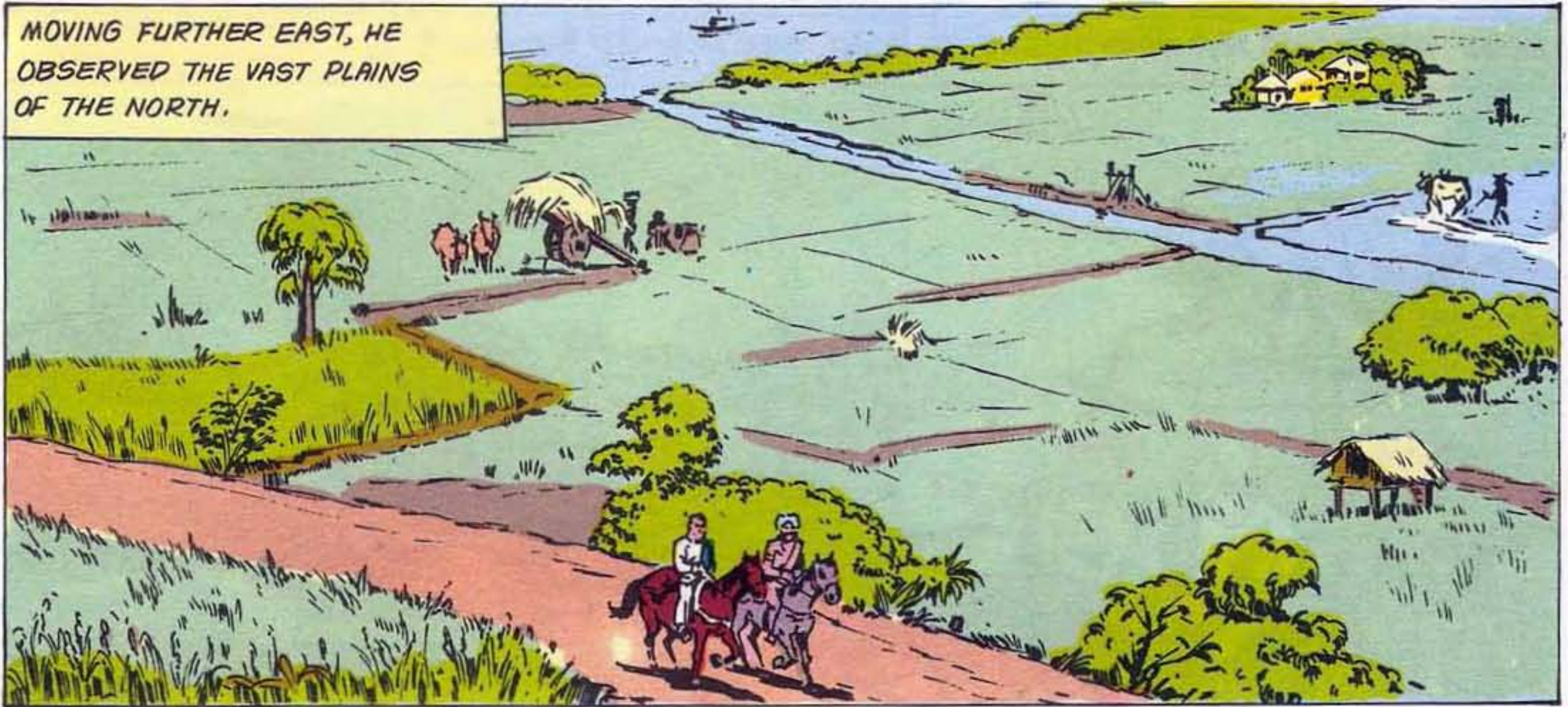
MEGASTHENES OBSERVED DEVOTEES WORSHIPPING THE RIVER.

O MOTHER GANGA! GRANT ME MY WISH.

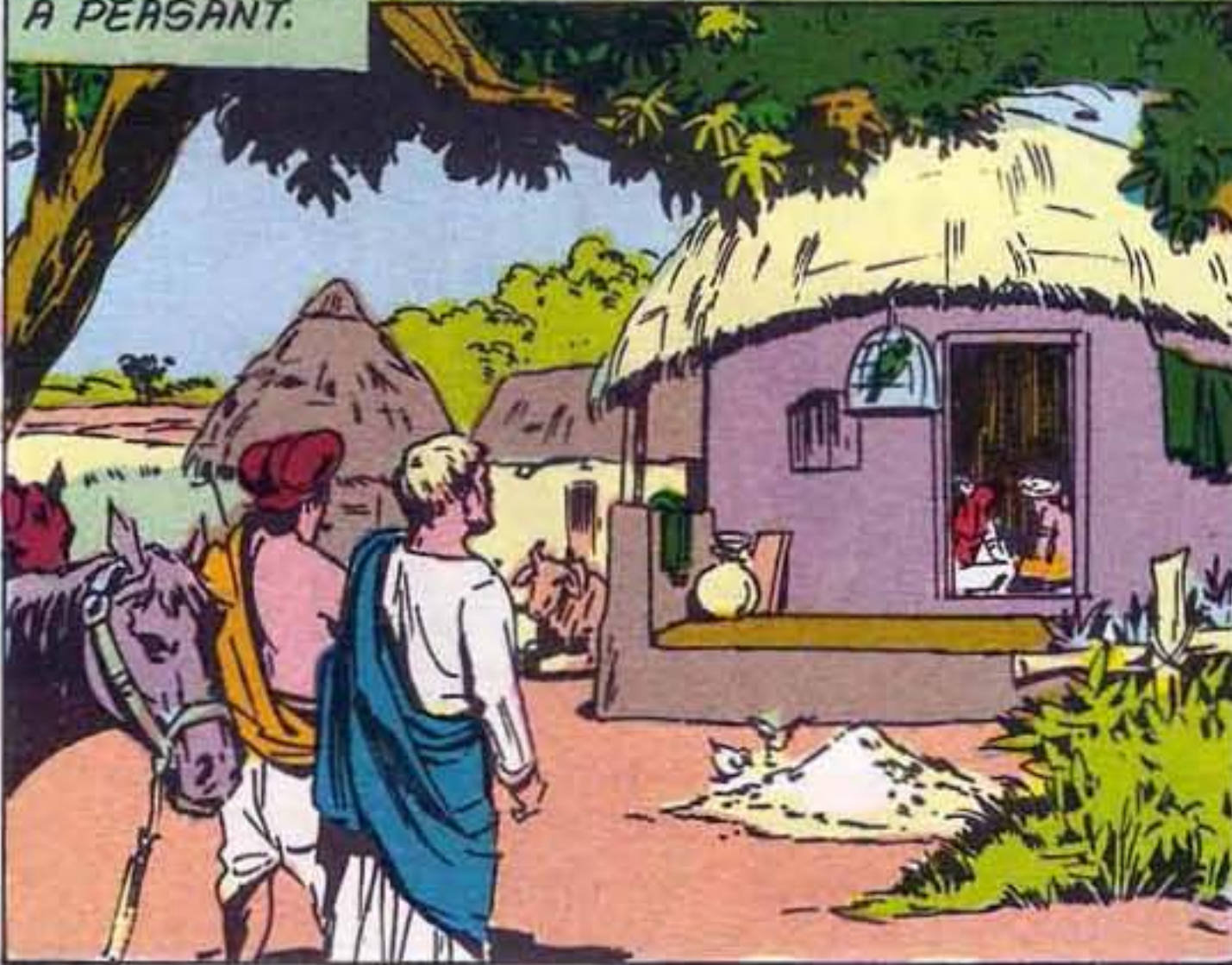
THIS RIVER DESERVES TO BE WORSHIPPED.



MOVING FURTHER EAST, HE OBSERVED THE VAST PLAINS OF THE NORTH.



EAGER TO LEARN ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, MEGASTHENES APPROACHED THE HOUSEHOLD OF A PEASANT.



HEARING THE HORSES APPROACHING, THE PEASANT'S CHILD LOOKED UP —

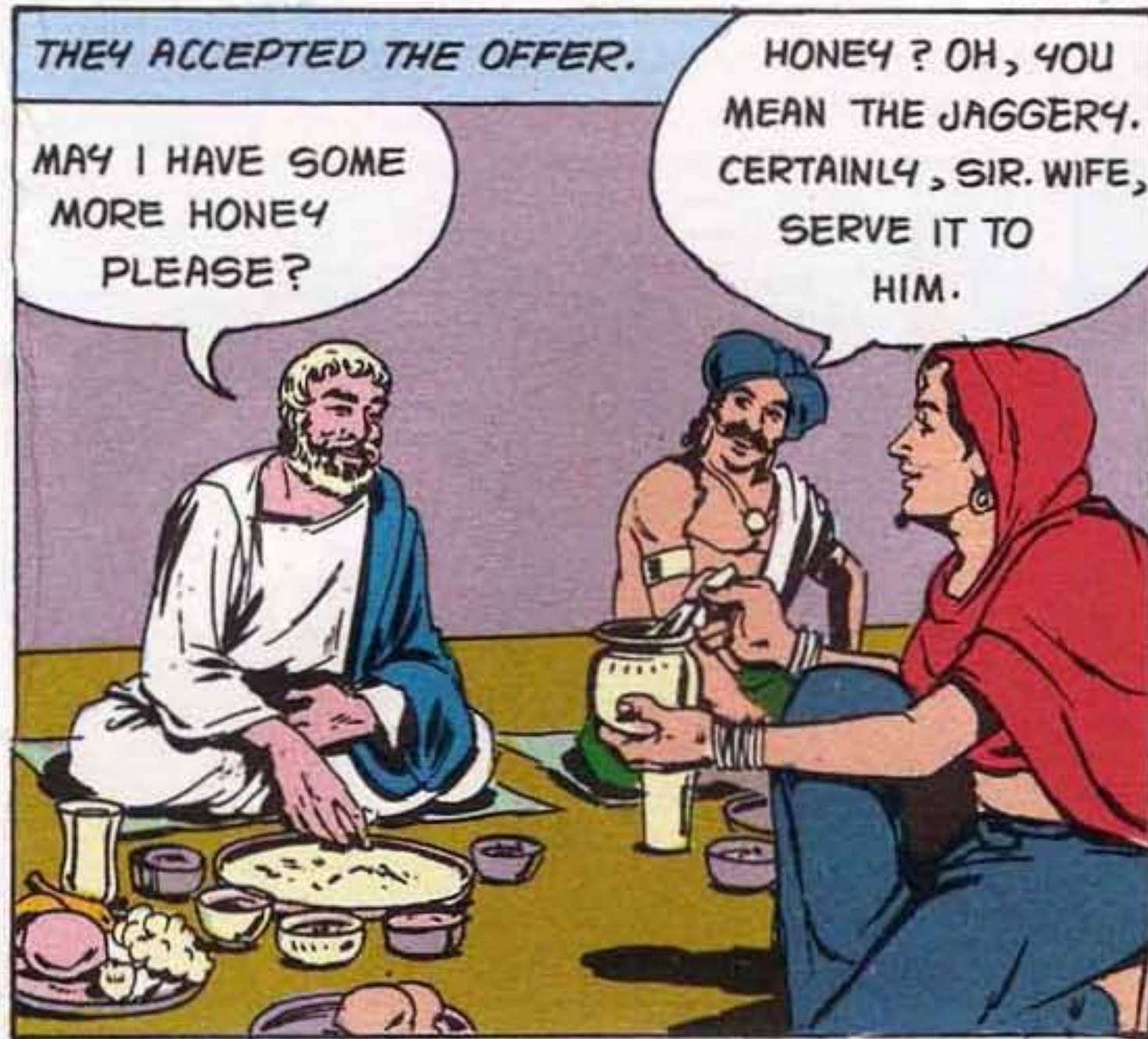


THE PEASANT'S WIFE TURNED ROUND TO SEE WHO WAS COMING.



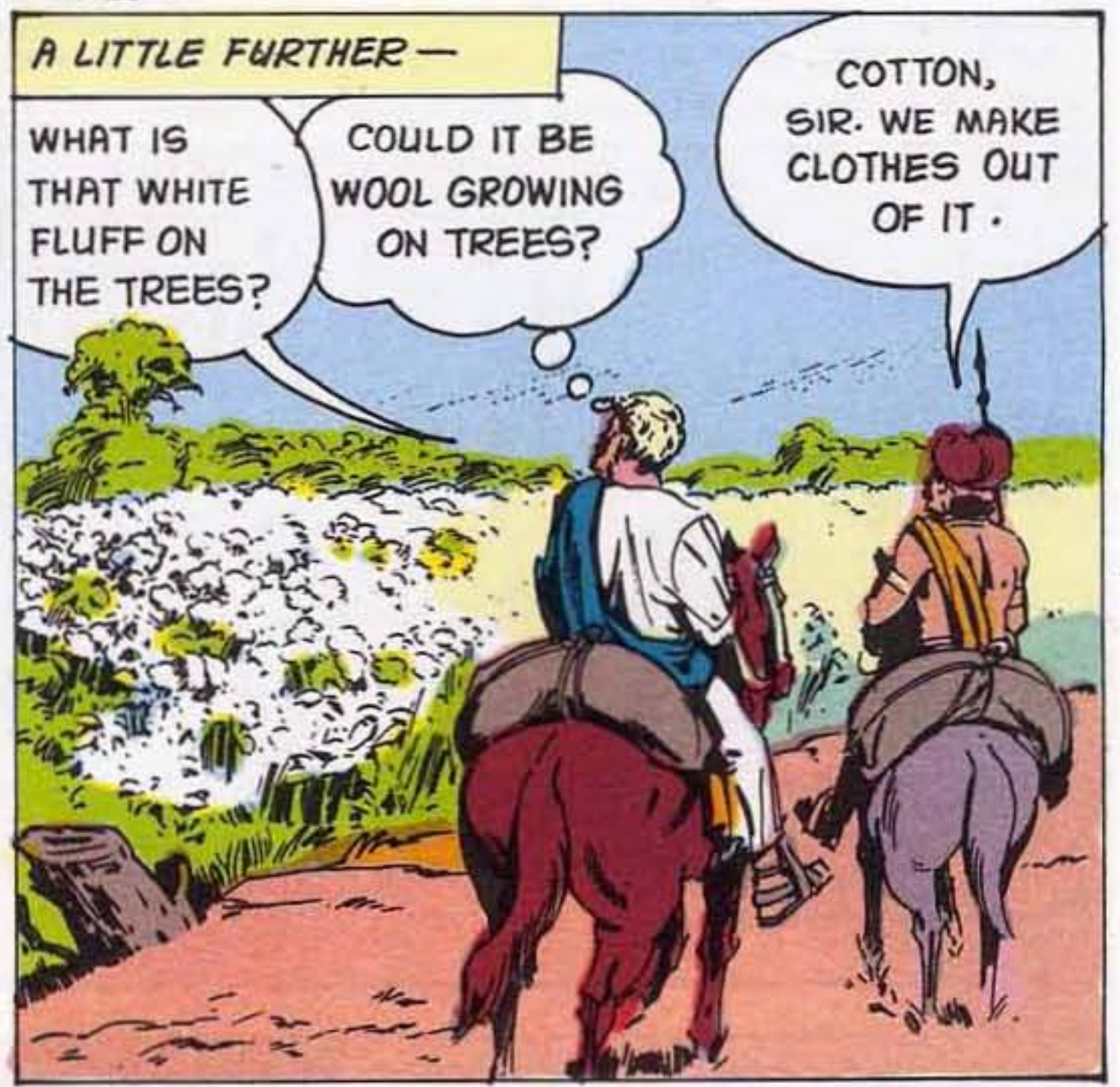
THE PEASANT WELCOMED THE VISITORS.





MEGASTHENES AND THE SERVANT BADE THE PEASANT AND HIS FAMILY GOODBYE AND RESUMED THEIR JOURNEY TO PATALIPUTRA.

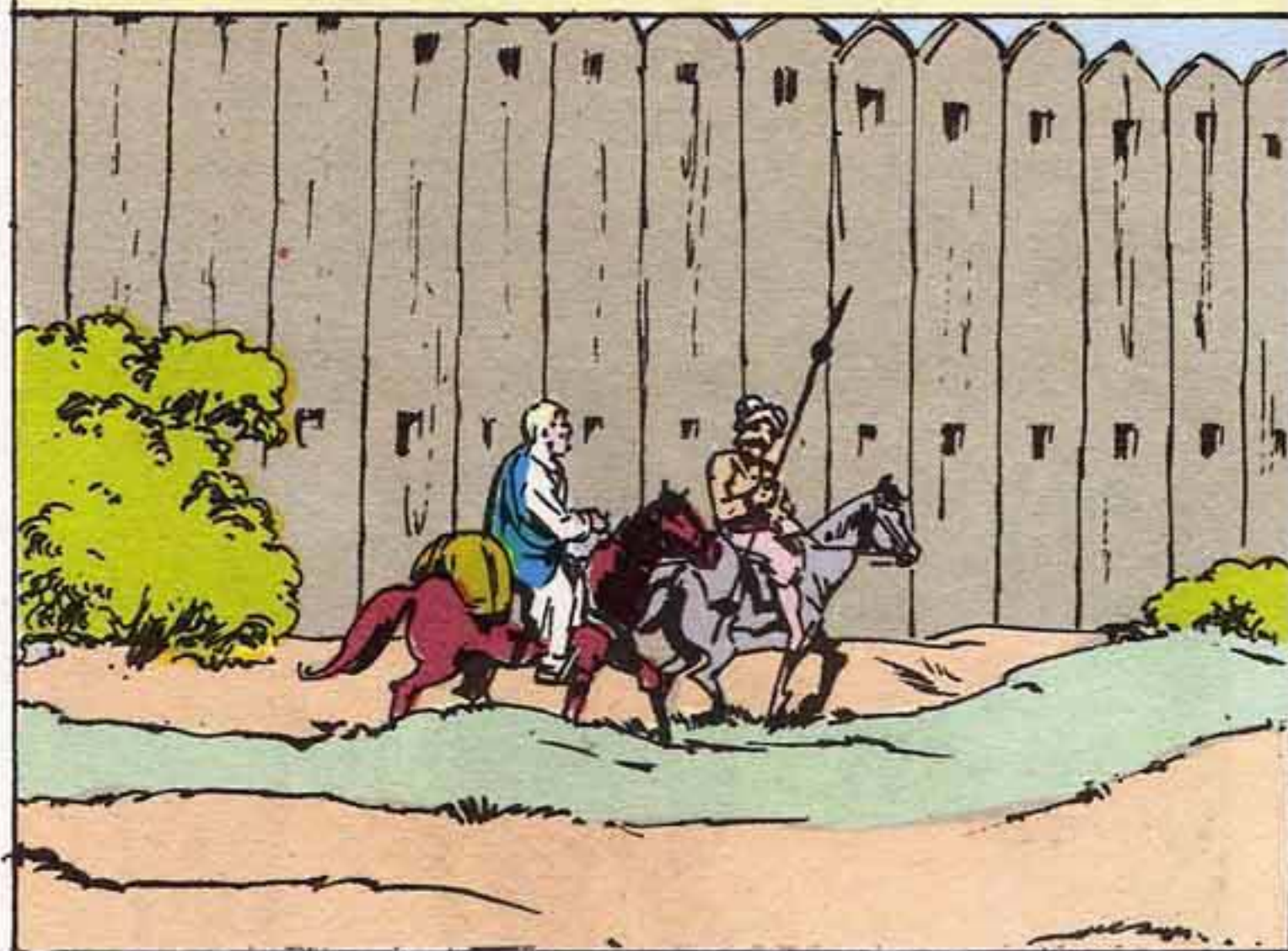




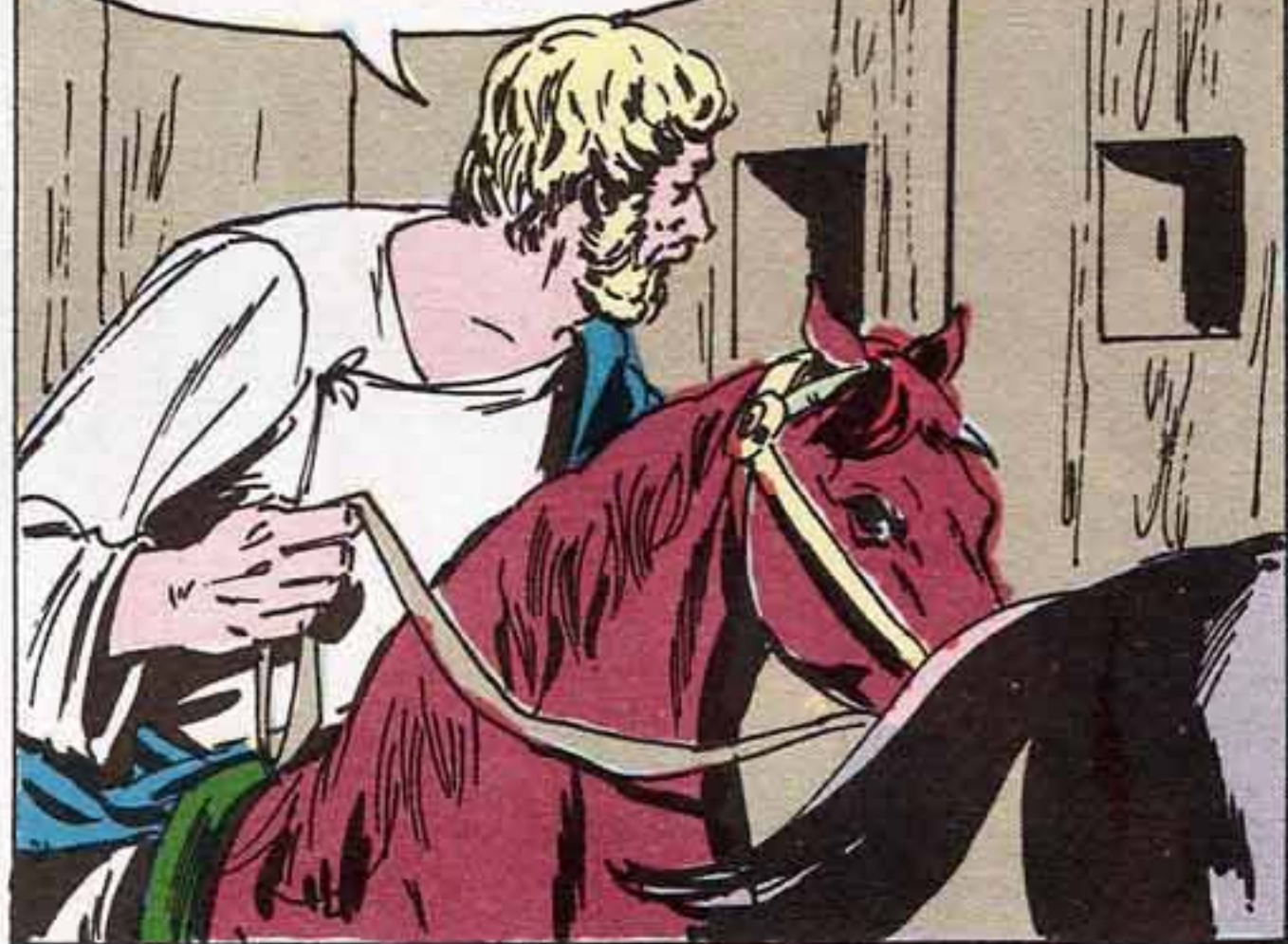
AFTER A FEW MORE WEEKS' JOURNEY THEY ARRIVED AT PATALIPUTRA.



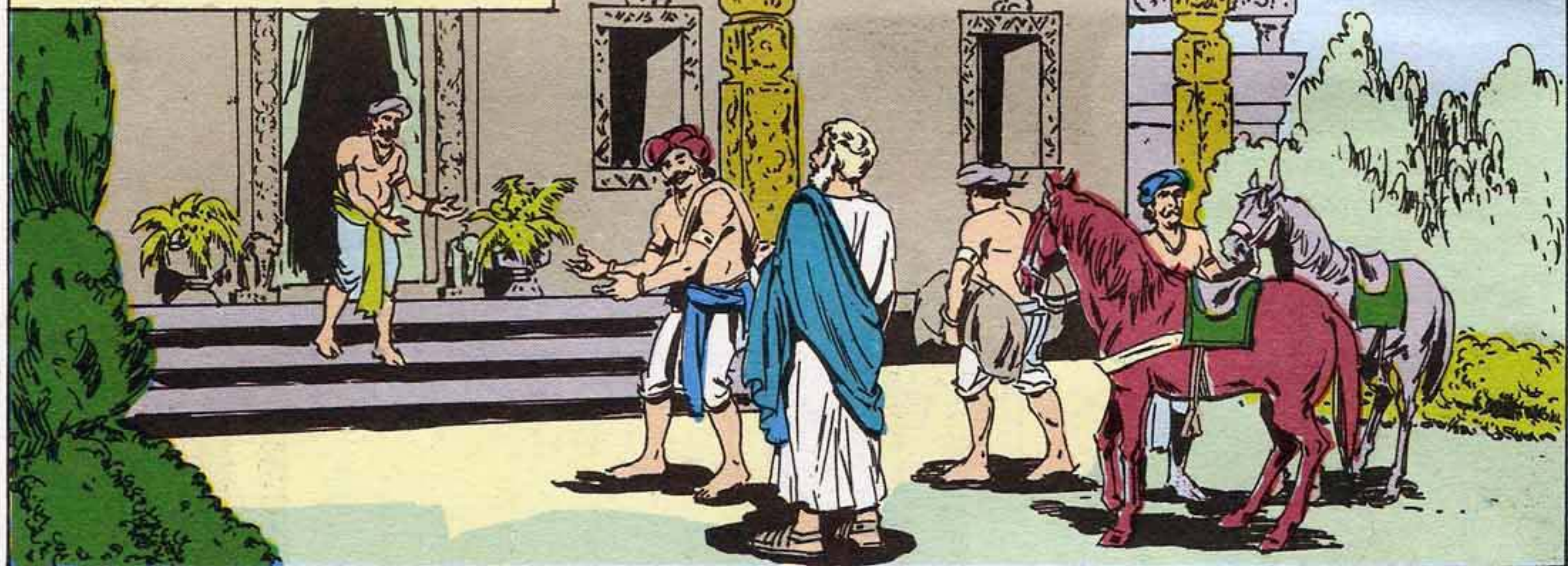
THE SERVANT LED MEGASTHENES ON A ROUND OF THE CITY. MEGASTHENES WAS VERY OBSERVANT.



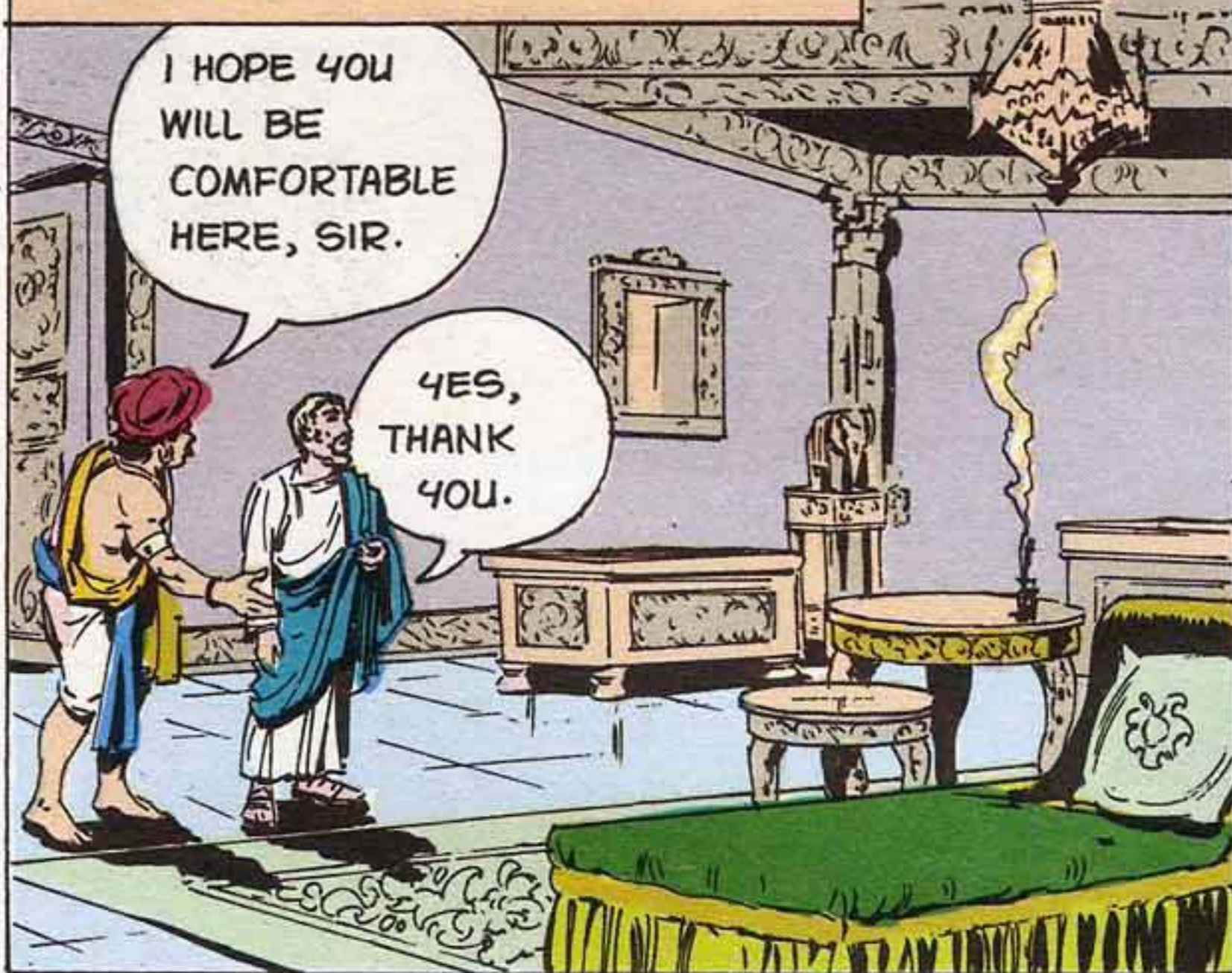
ARCHERS SHOOT AT THE ENEMY THROUGH THESE. THESE PRASII* ARE MARVELLOUS!



IT TOOK THEM SOME TIME TO REACH THE HOUSE ALLOTTED TO MEGASTHENES.



AS THEY ENTERED THE HOUSE —



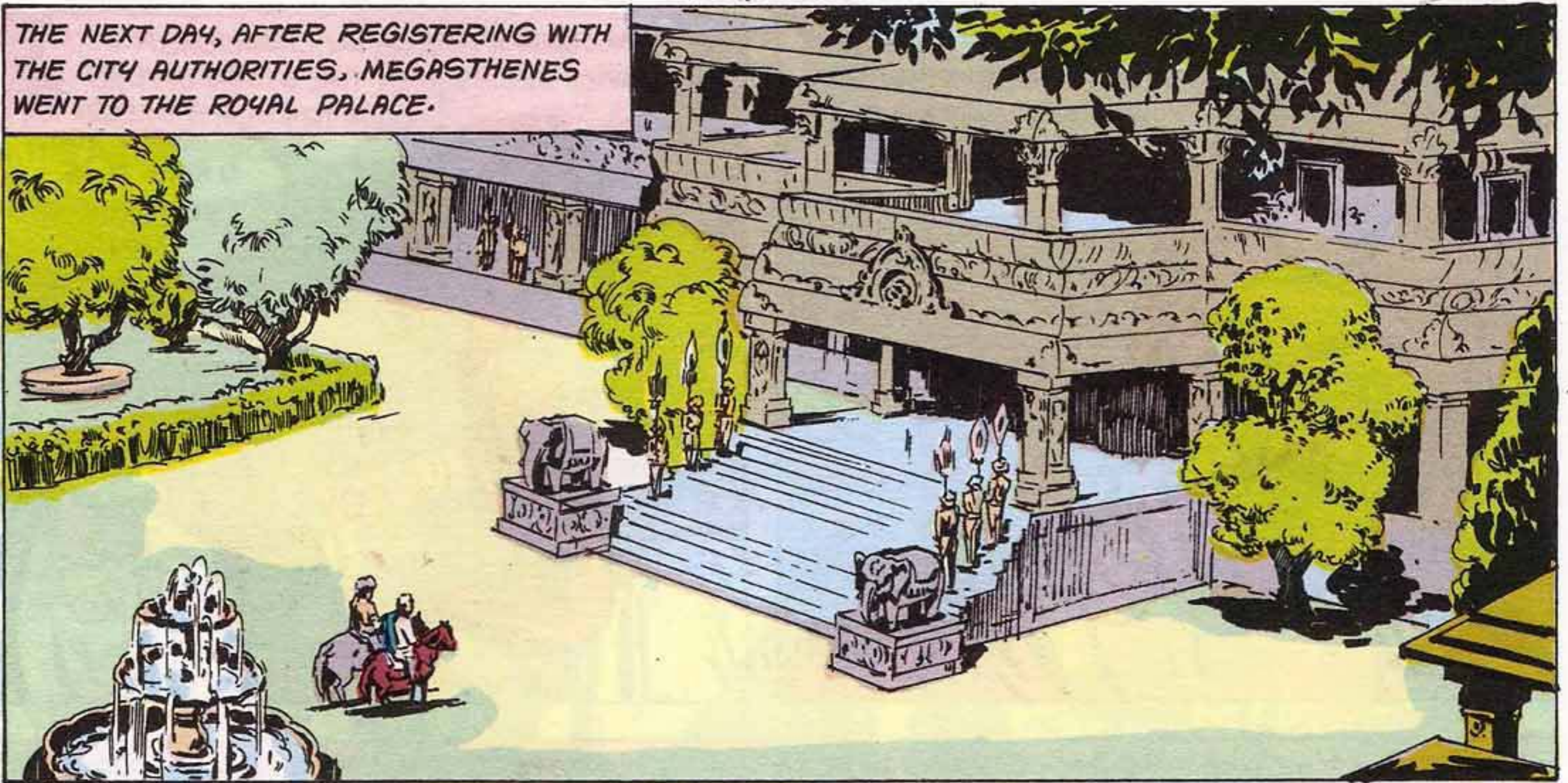
TOMORROW I'D LIKE TO VISIT KING SANDROCOTTUS.

FIRST YOU HAVE TO REGISTER YOUR NAME WITH THE CITY AUTHORITIES, SIR. ALL FOREIGNERS HAVE TO DO THIS.



* PRACHYAS (THE EASTERNERS), MEANING THE PEOPLE OF MAGADHA

THE NEXT DAY, AFTER REGISTERING WITH THE CITY AUTHORITIES, MEGASTHENES WENT TO THE ROYAL PALACE.



INSIDE THE ROYAL COURT, KING CHANDRAGUPTA WELCOMED MEGASTHENES.

WELCOME, MEGASTHENES. YOU NEED NOT HAVE GONE TO THE CITY AUTHORITIES. YOU ARE A SPECIAL GUEST.

HOW DID HE KNOW? HIS SPIES MUST HAVE REPORTED TO HIM.



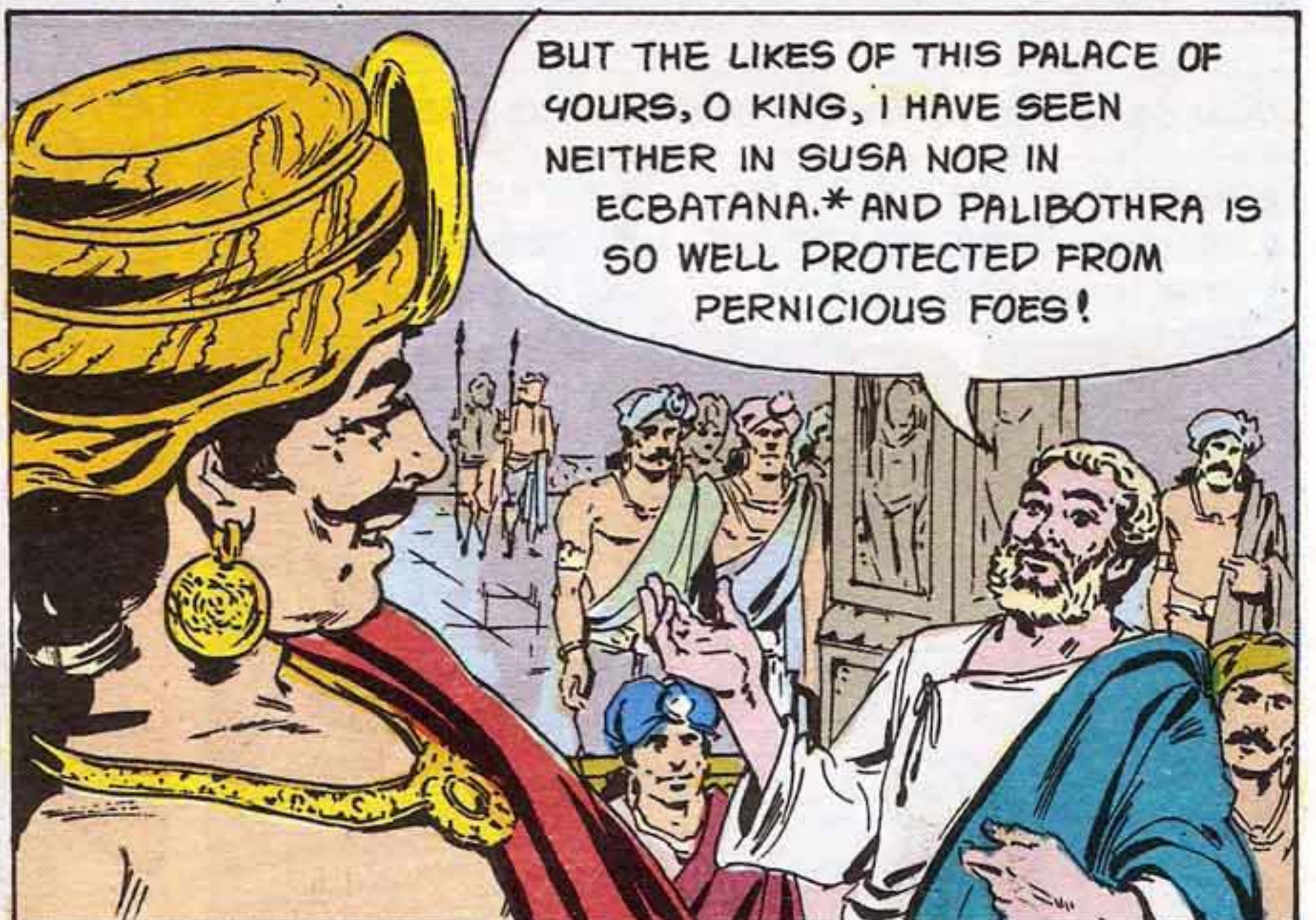
YOU HAVE A VERY SPLENDID PALACE, O KING SANDROCOTTUS!



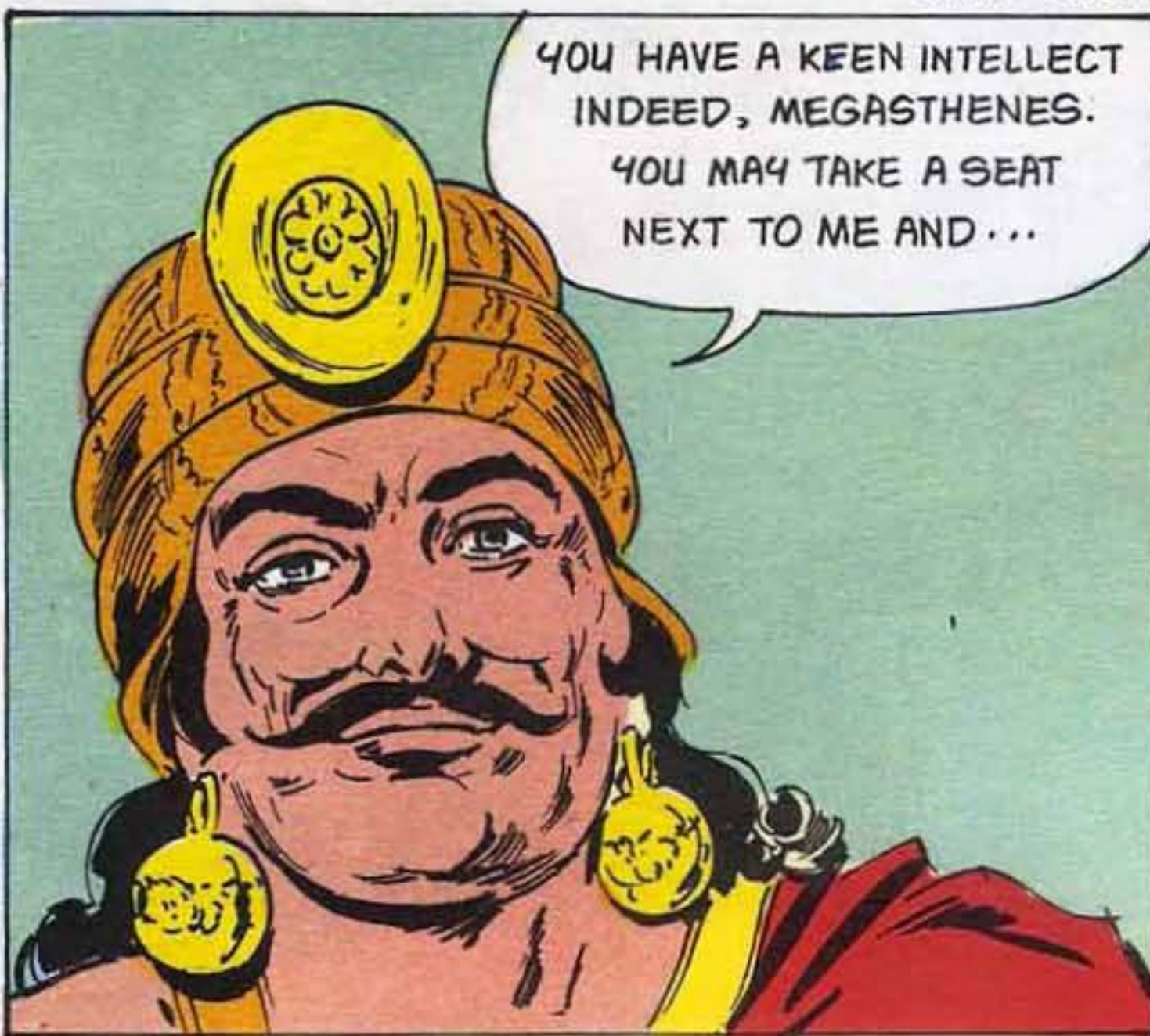
I HAVE LIVED IN MANY EXOTIC LANDS...



BUT THE LIKES OF THIS PALACE OF YOURS, O KING, I HAVE SEEN NEITHER IN SUSA NOR IN ECBATANA.* AND PALIBOTHTRA IS SO WELL PROTECTED FROM PERNICIOUS FOES!



*IRANIAN CITIES WHERE PALACES WERE REPORTEDLY OF GOLD AND SILVER.



YOU HAVE A KEEN INTELLECT
INDEED, MEGASTHENES.
YOU MAY TAKE A SEAT
NEXT TO ME AND...

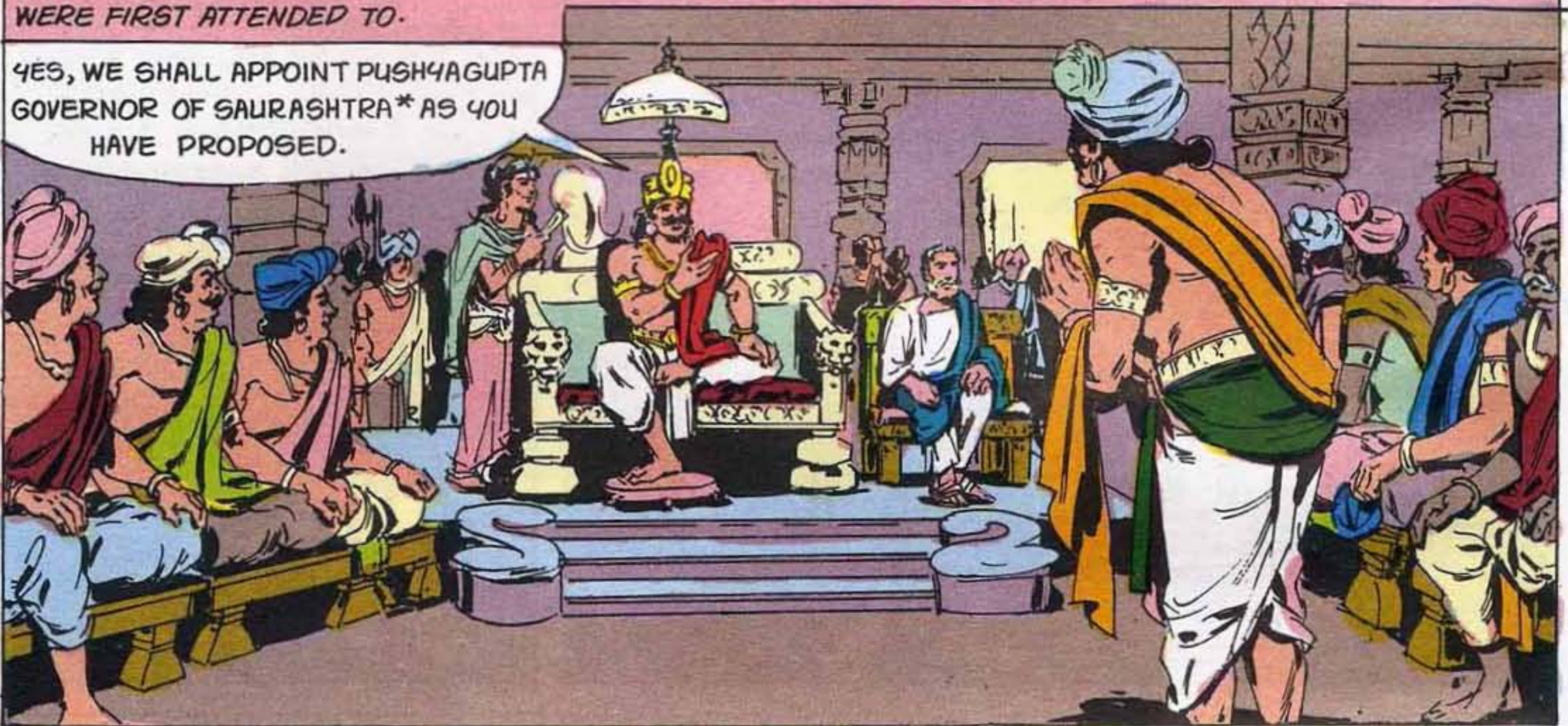


...ACCOMPANY ME ON MY CAMPAIGNS. THIS
WILL HELP YOU IN THE STUDY OF THIS
COUNTRY.

THANK YOU,
O KING. IT IS
VERY KIND OF
YOU.

MEGASTHENES WATCHED THE PROCEEDINGS WITH FASCINATION. MATTERS PERTAINING TO ADMINISTRATION WERE FIRST ATTENDED TO.

YES, WE SHALL APPOINT PUSHYAGUPTA
GOVERNOR OF SAURASHTRA* AS YOU
HAVE PROPOSED.



THEN CAME THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE —

MAHARAJ! HE HAS COMMITTED
A HEINOUS CRIME. HE CUT OFF
THE HAND OF A POTTER.

HIS
PUNISHMENT
IS DEATH.



* PART OF MODERN GUJARAT.

AFTER THE PRISONERS AND THE GUARDS LEFT—

MAHARAJ, I WANTED TO DISCUSS
A SMALL MATTER PERTAINING
TO THE ROYAL PROCESSION
TOMORROW.



THAT CAN WAIT. LET ME FIRST FINISH MY BUSINESS WITH THE AMBASSADORS.

SUCH HARD WORK AND HE DOES NOT HAVE A REST!

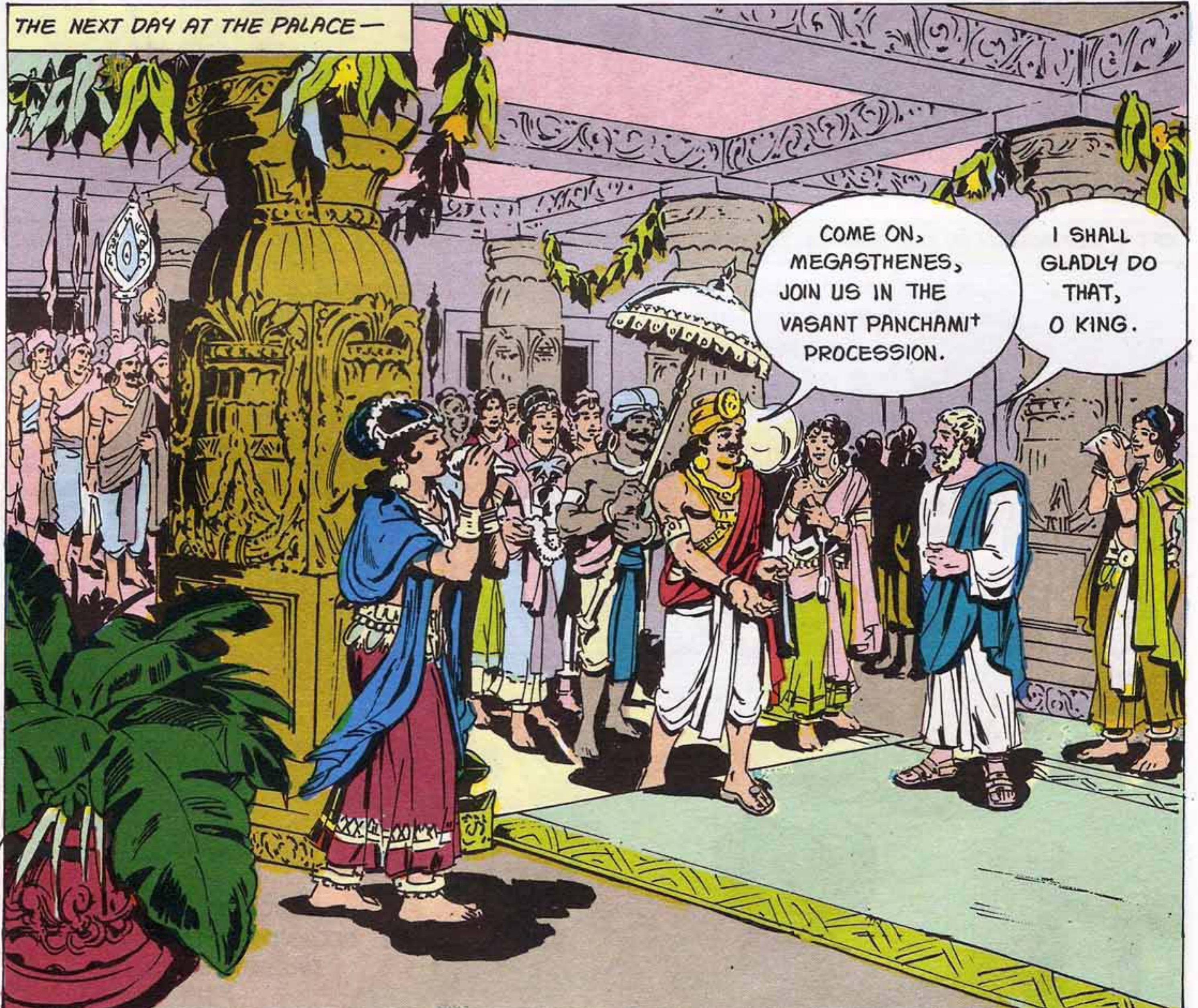


AFTER RETURNING TO HIS RESIDENCE MEGASTHENES WROTE ABOUT WHAT HE HAD LEARNT AT THE ROYAL COURT.

"THE ASTYNOMOI* OF PALIBOTHTHA LOOK AFTER SIX SUBJECTS: INDUSTRIAL ARTS; FOREIGNERS; CENSUS; TRADE AND COMMERCE; WEIGHTS AND MEASURES; AND COLLECTION OF TAXES..."



THE NEXT DAY AT THE PALACE —

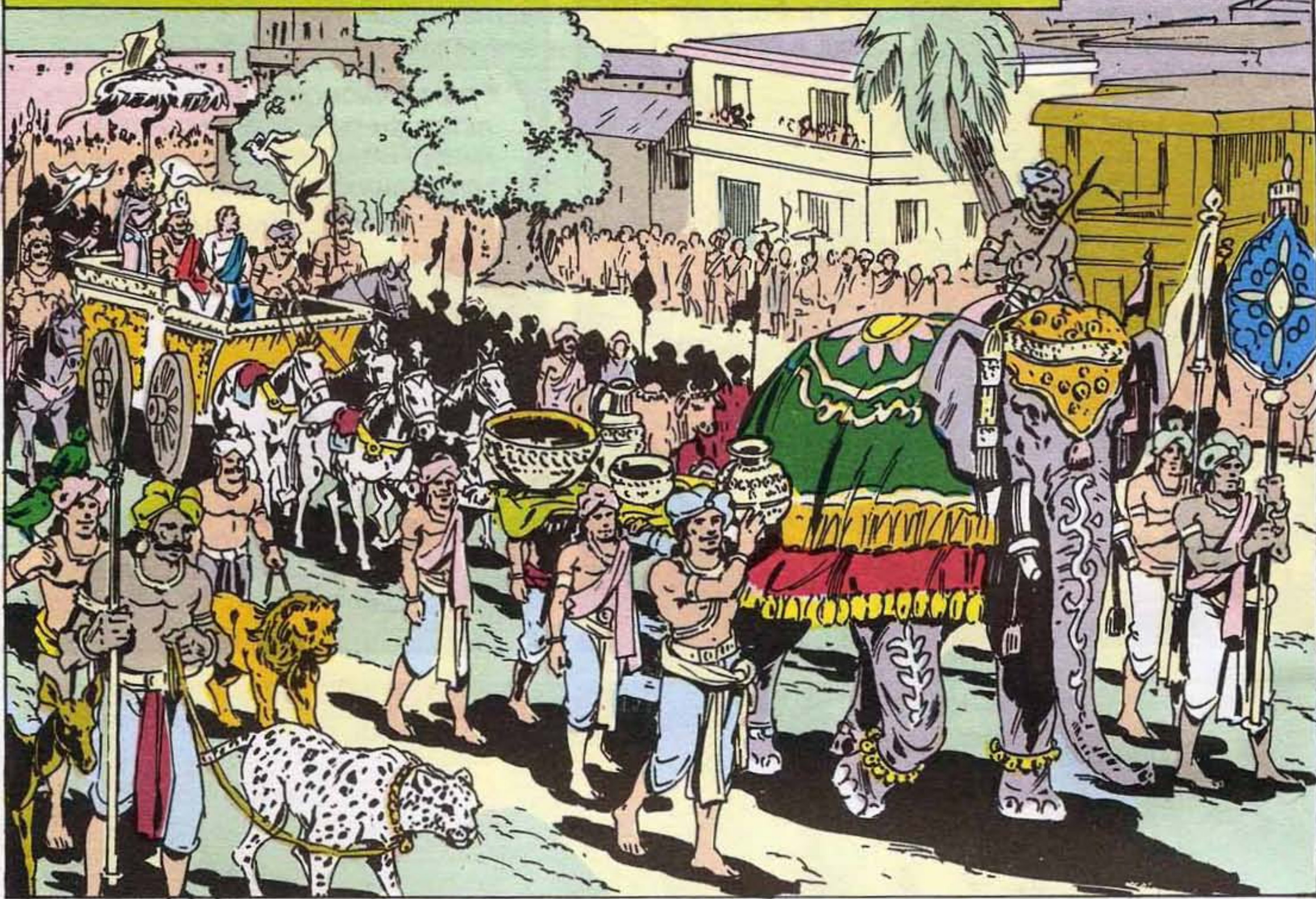


COME ON, MEGASTHENES, JOIN US IN THE VASANT PANCHAMI† PROCESSION.

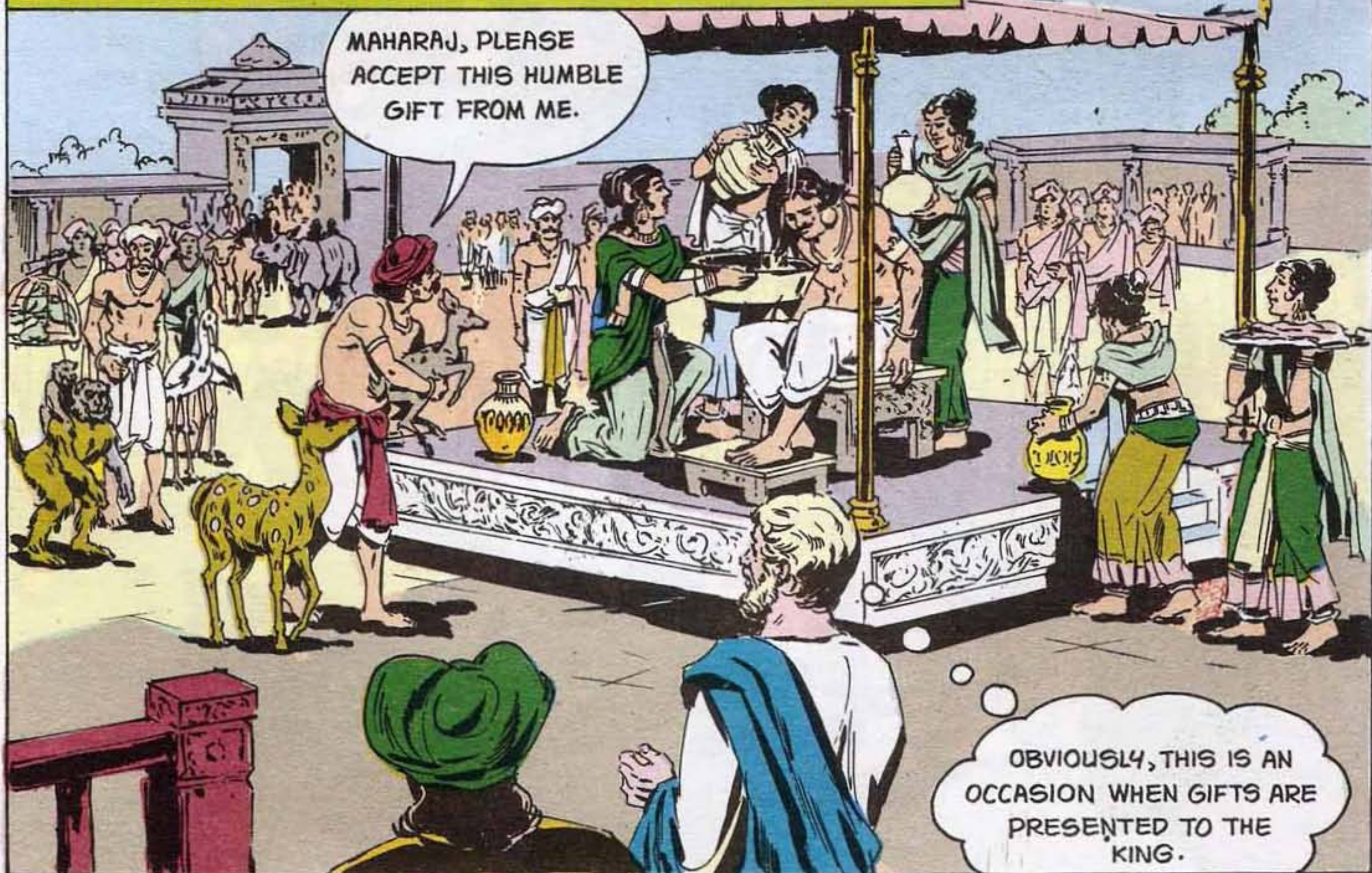
I SHALL GLADLY DO THAT, O KING.

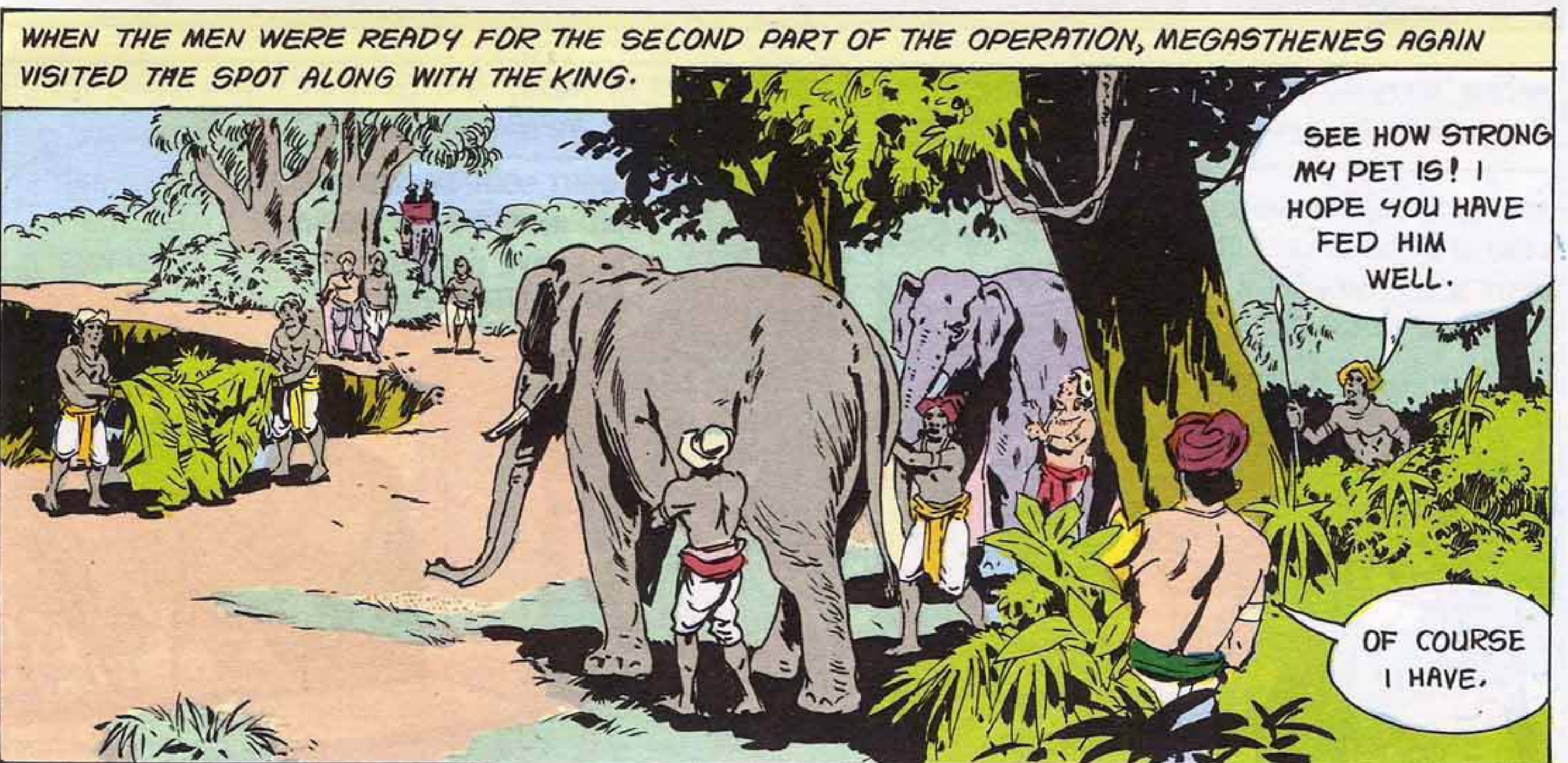
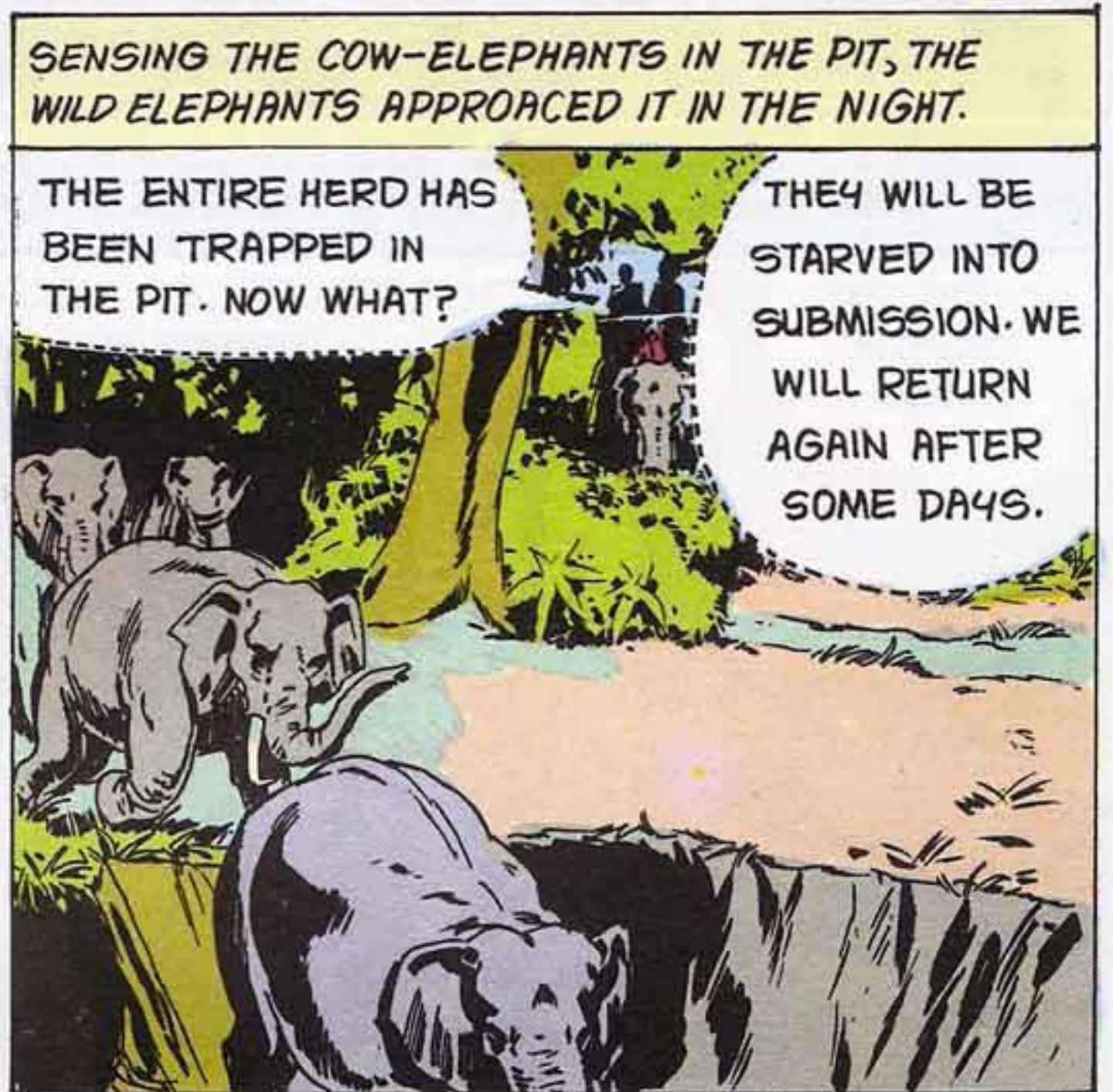
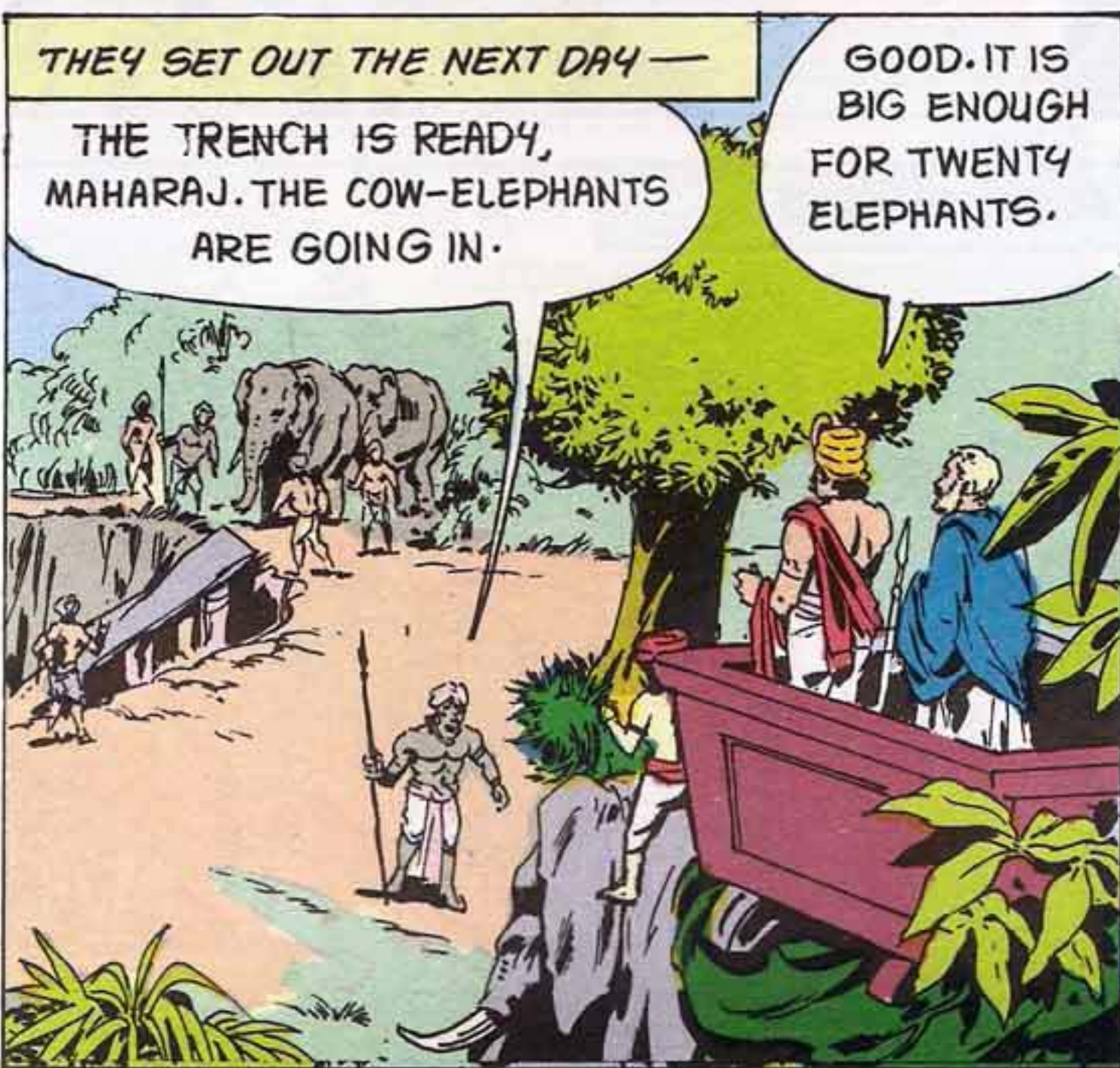
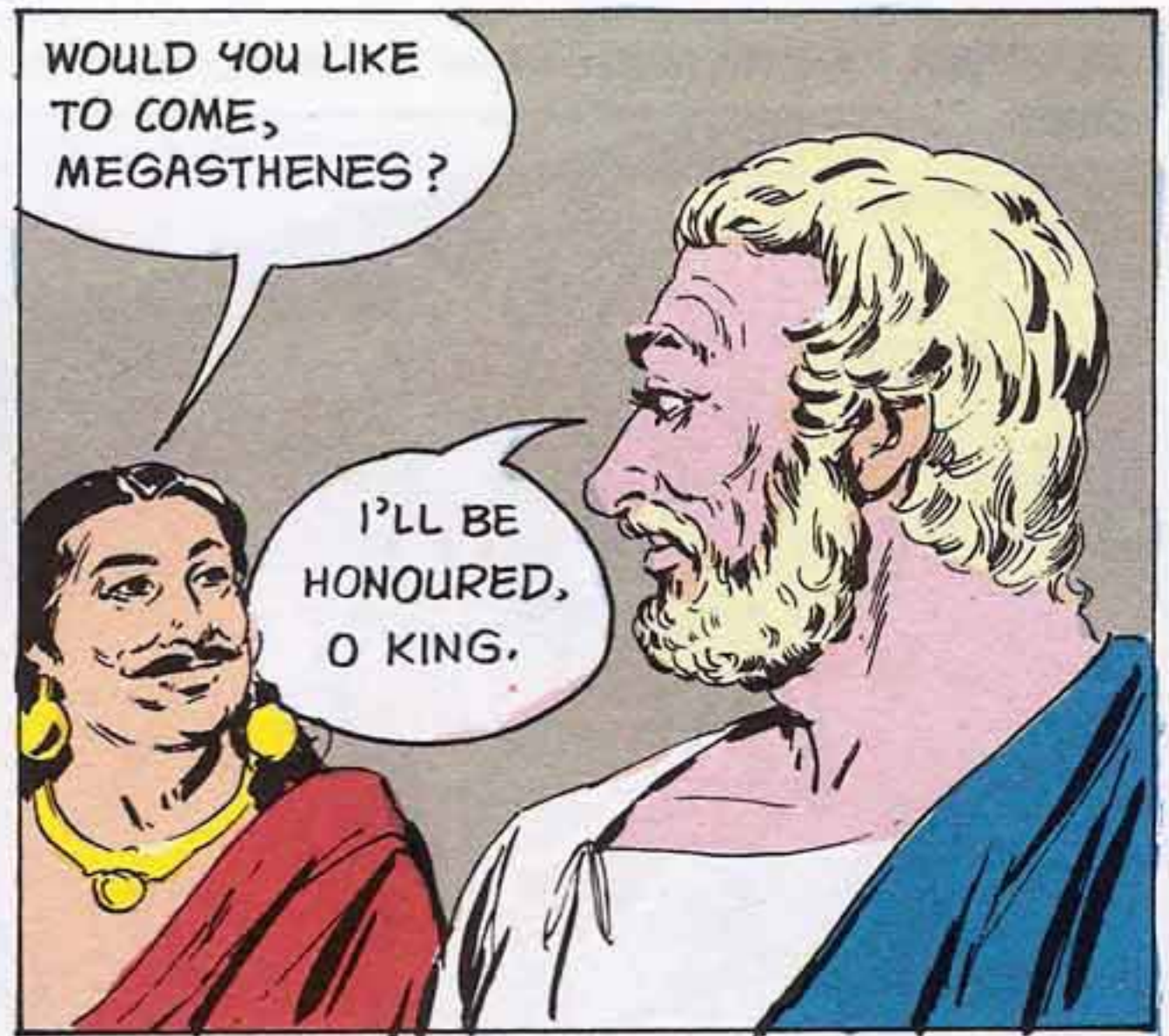
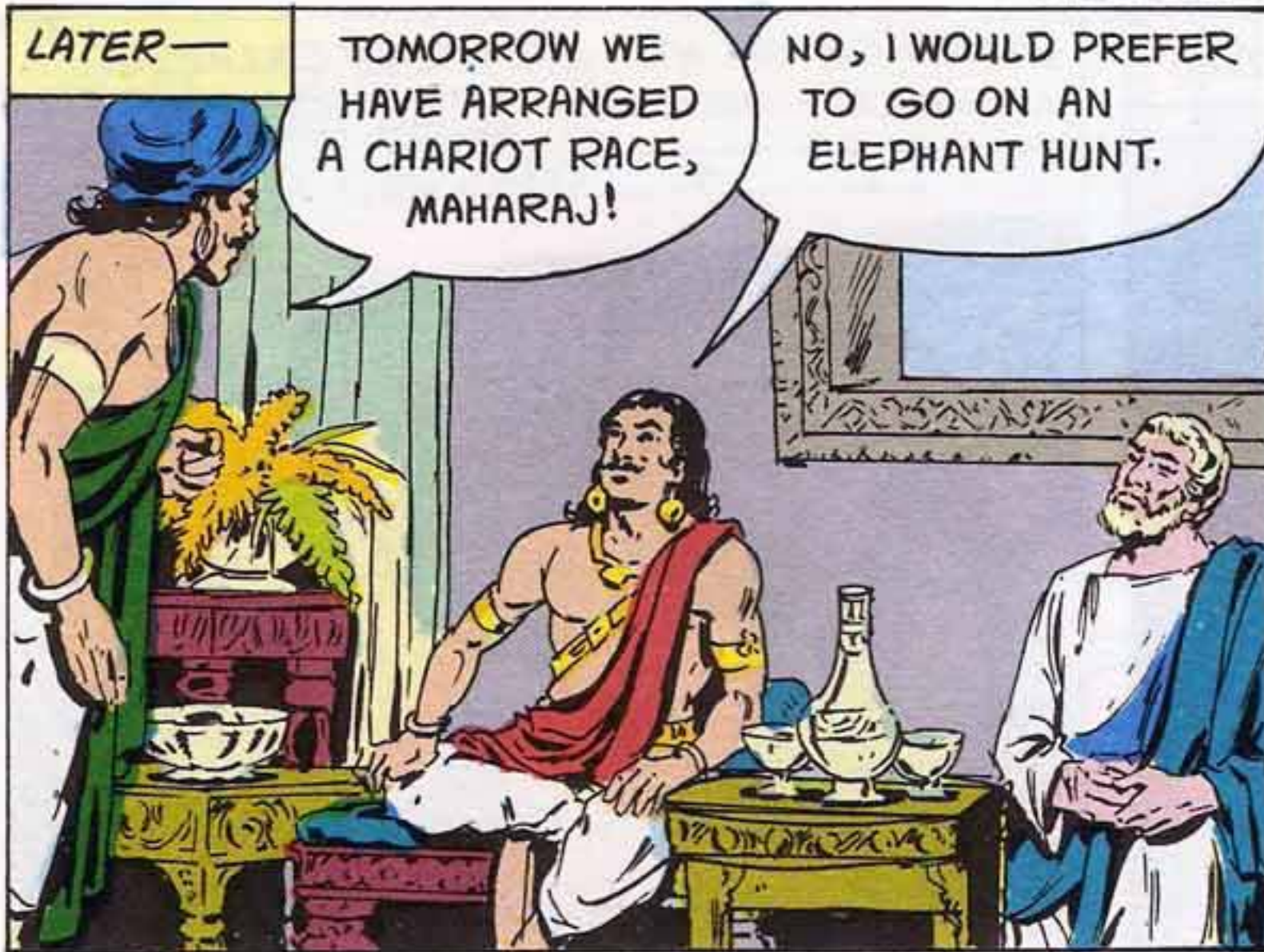
*Officers, perhaps from ashta amatya = eight ministers. †It is presumed that the occasion was Vasanta Panchami. Megasthenes has not mentioned the name of the festival.

THE PROCESSION PASSED THROUGH THE MAIN STREETS OF PATALIPUTRA.



AFTER RETURNING TO THE PALACE, THE KING RECEIVED VISITORS —





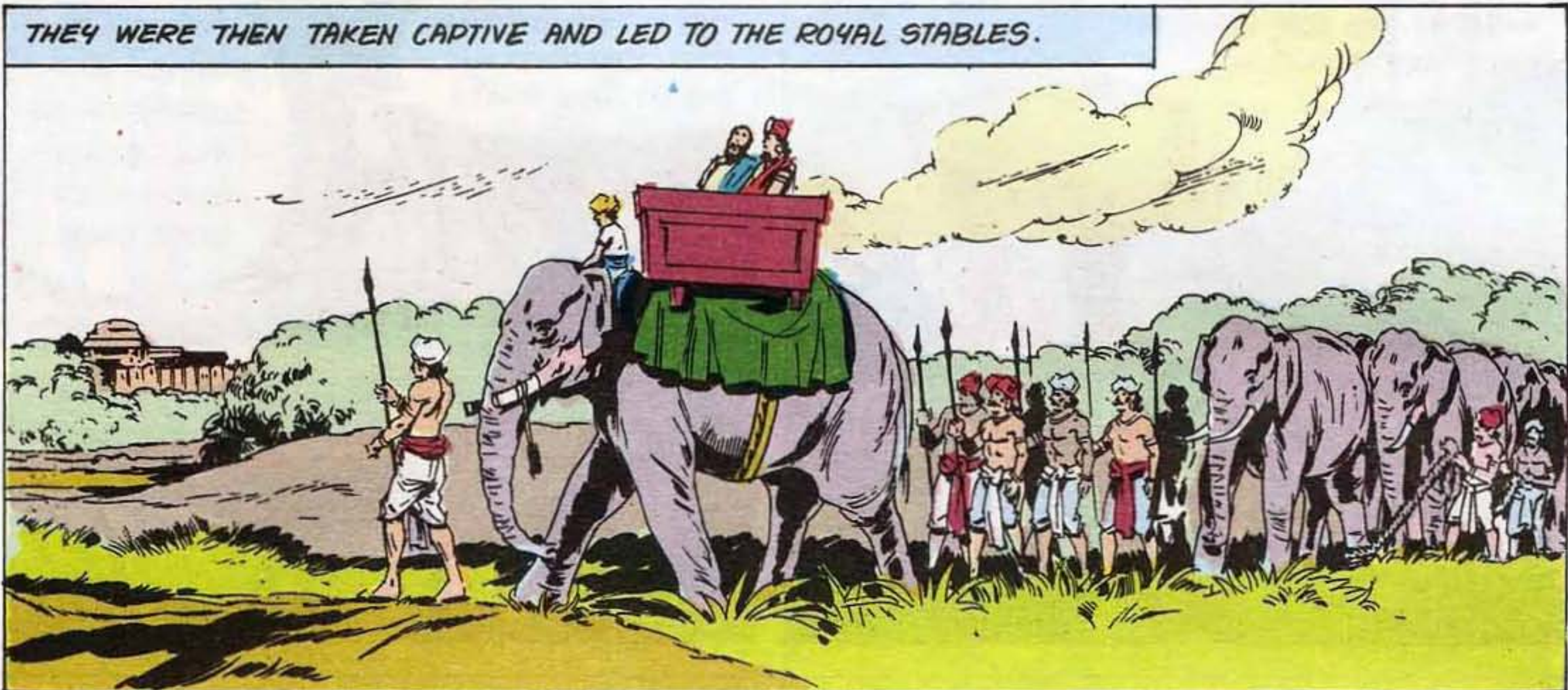
TRAPPED, THE WILD ELEPHANTS ATTACKED THE TAME ONES.



WEAKENED, THE WILD ONES SOON COLLAPSED IN SHEER EXHAUSTION.



THEY WERE THEN TAKEN CAPTIVE AND LED TO THE ROYAL STABLES.



AFTER RETURNING HOME, MEGASTHENES SUMMONED HIS SERVANT.

YOURS IS AN INTERESTING LAND. I SHOULD LIKE TO VISIT THE COMMON PEOPLE IN DISGUISE.

I SHALL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS, SIR.



HE SET OUT AT NIGHT AND SECRETLY WATCHED THE PEOPLE AT ONE HOUSE —

I WANT YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE FOR MY SON. I HAVE BROUGHT THE PAIR OF OXEN YOU HAD ASKED FOR.

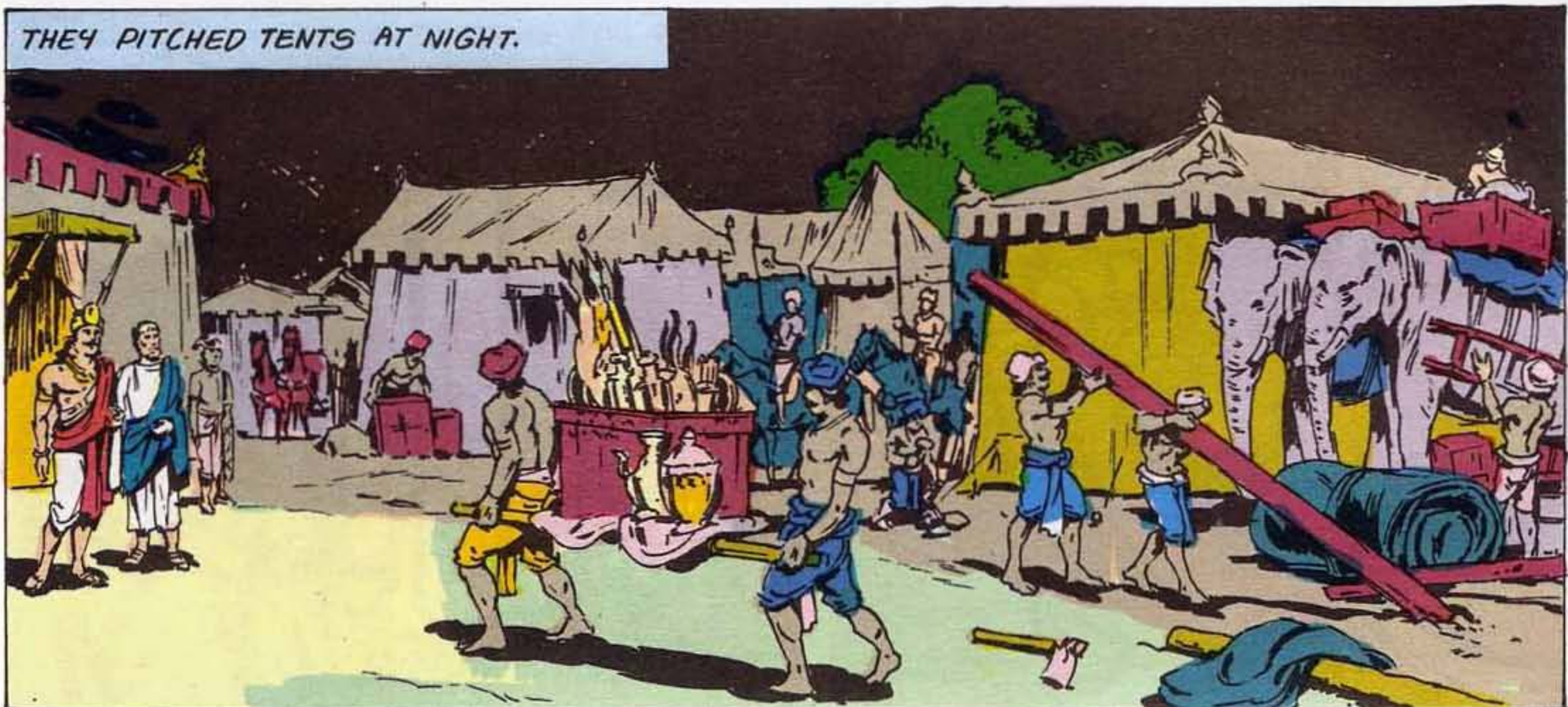
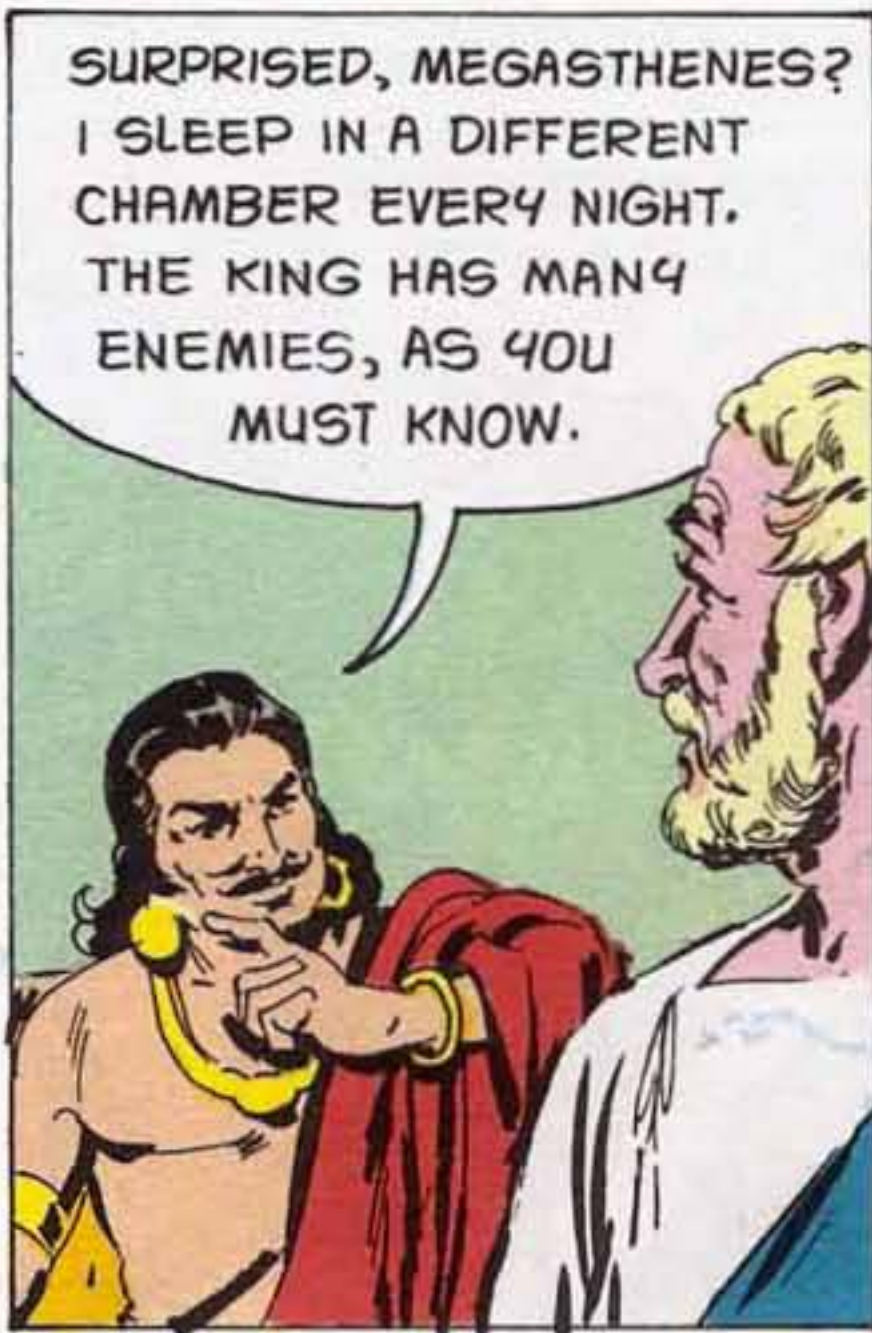
WILL SHE BE HIS THIRD WIFE?





* THE COMPLICATED CASTE STRUCTURE OF INDIAN SOCIETY OBVIOUSLY BEWILDERED MEGASTHENES, FOR THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ONLY FOUR PRIMARY CASTES.

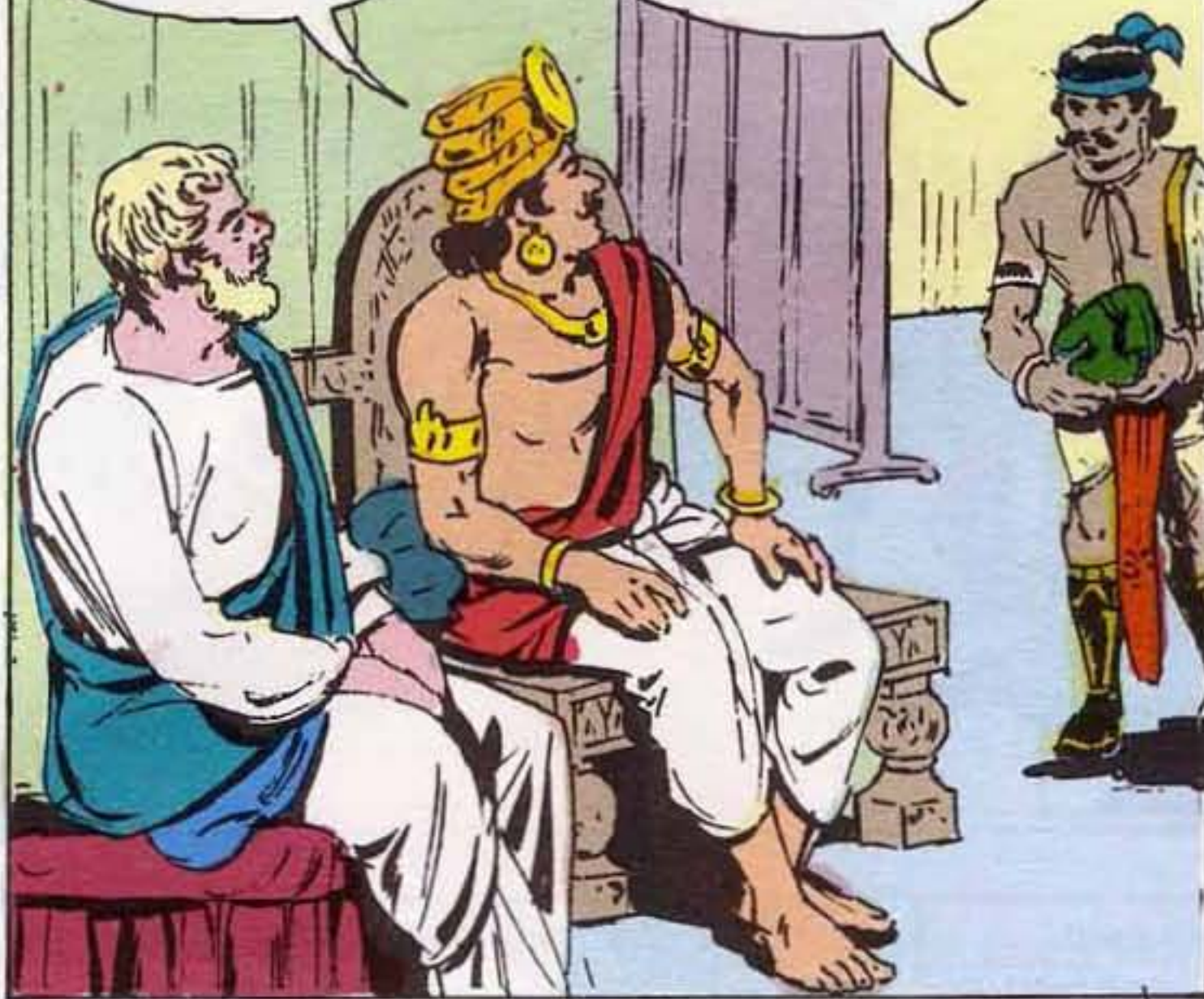




HEARING THE COMMOTION, CHANDRAGUPTA ENQUIRED:

WHAT IS THE
MATTER,
GUARD?

A THIEF STOLE
200 COINS,
MAHARAJ.



WE RECOVERED THE
MONEY BUT THE THIEF
GOT AWAY. HERE'S
THE MONEY,
MAHARAJ.

RETURN IT TO THE
OWNER AND SPARE
NO EFFORT TO
CATCH THE THIEF.



MEGASTHENES WAS INTRIGUED BY THE INCIDENT.

200 COINS IS A SMALL
AMOUNT, O KING. WHY
ARE YOU MAKING
SUCH A FUSS?

STEALING IS A RARE
OCCURRENCE. BUT IF
THIS GOES UNPUNISHED,
THE VICE MAY
SPREAD.

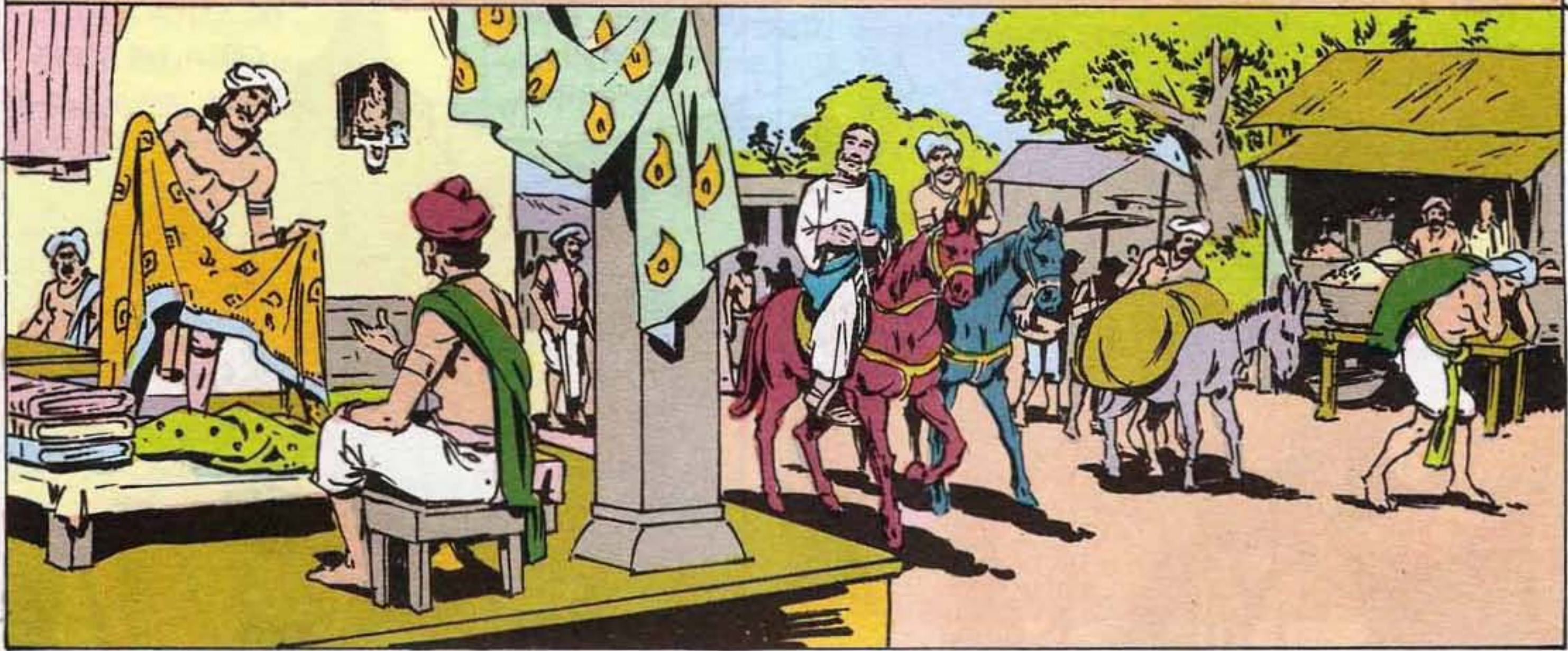


MEGASTHENES LATER WROTE HIS OBSERVATIONS
ABOUT THE ARMY:

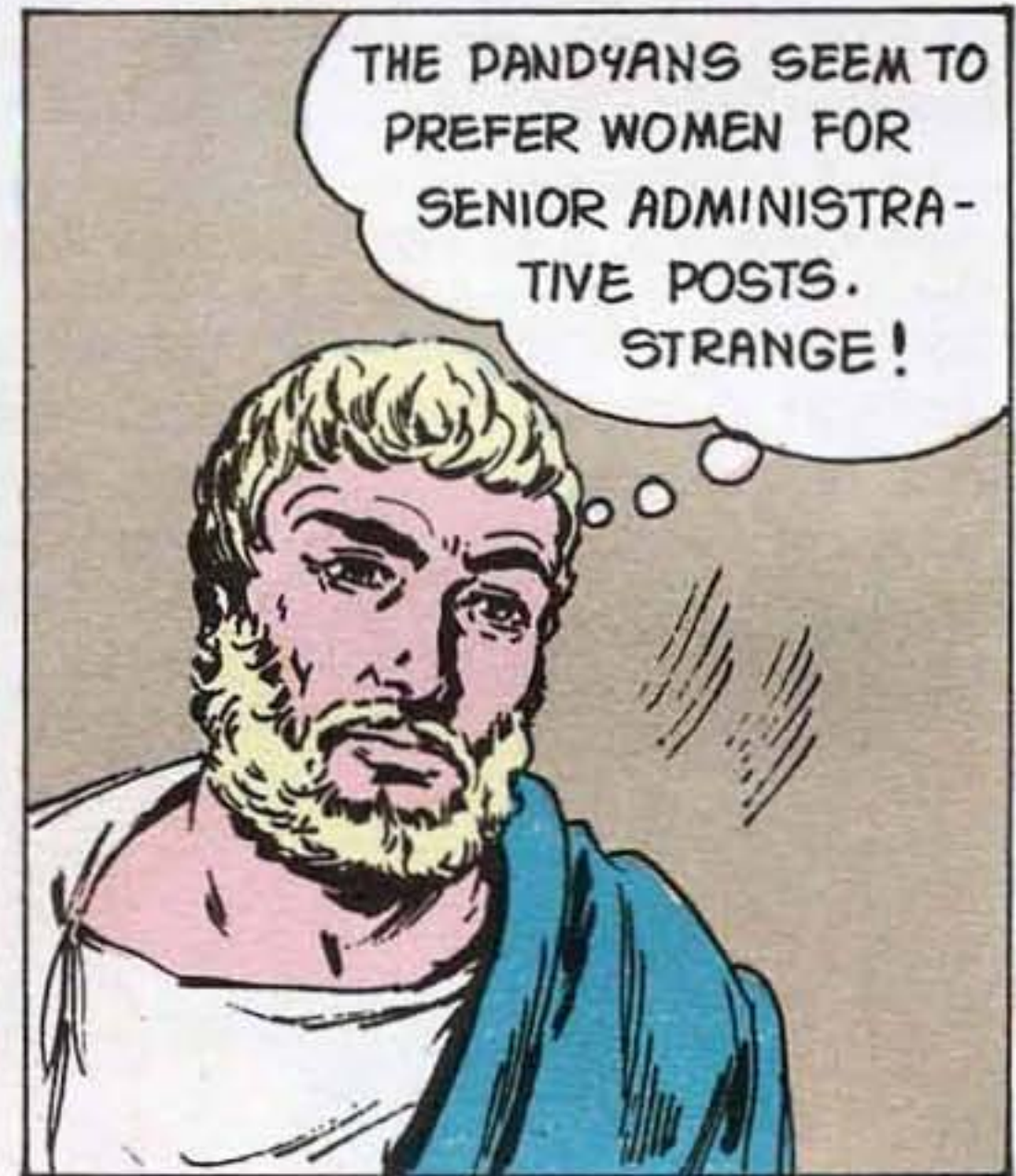
"THE 600,000 SOLDIERS
OF SANDROCOTTUS' ARMY
ARE VERY WELL-PAID. THEY
ARE CONTROLLED BY A
WAR OFFICE WITH SIX
BOARDS..."



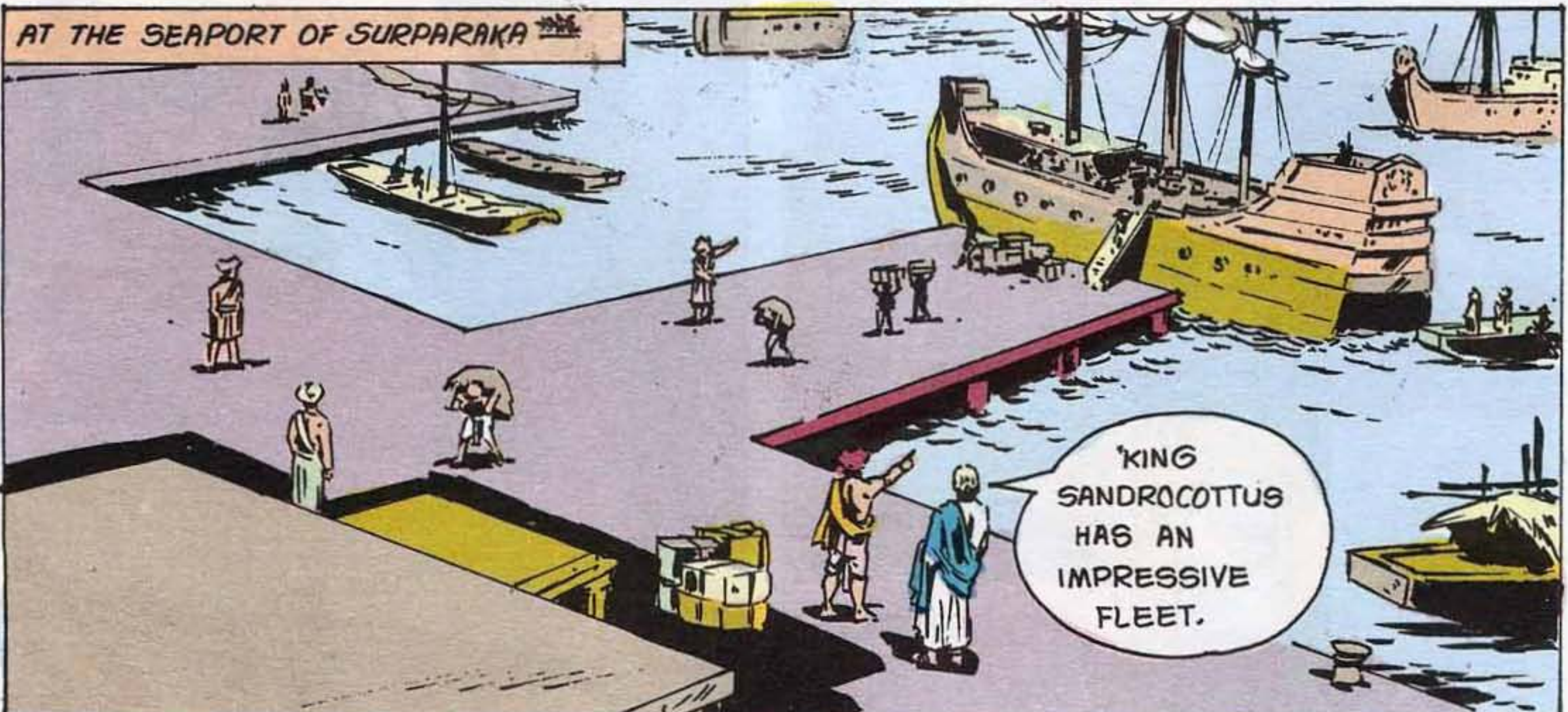
HE TOURED THE COUNTRY EXTENSIVELY AND OBSERVED THE WAY OF LIFE OF THE PEOPLE.



HE EVEN VISITED THE FAR AWAY PANDYA* COUNTRY, AND OBSERVED THE SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION THERE, HEADED BY A QUEEN.



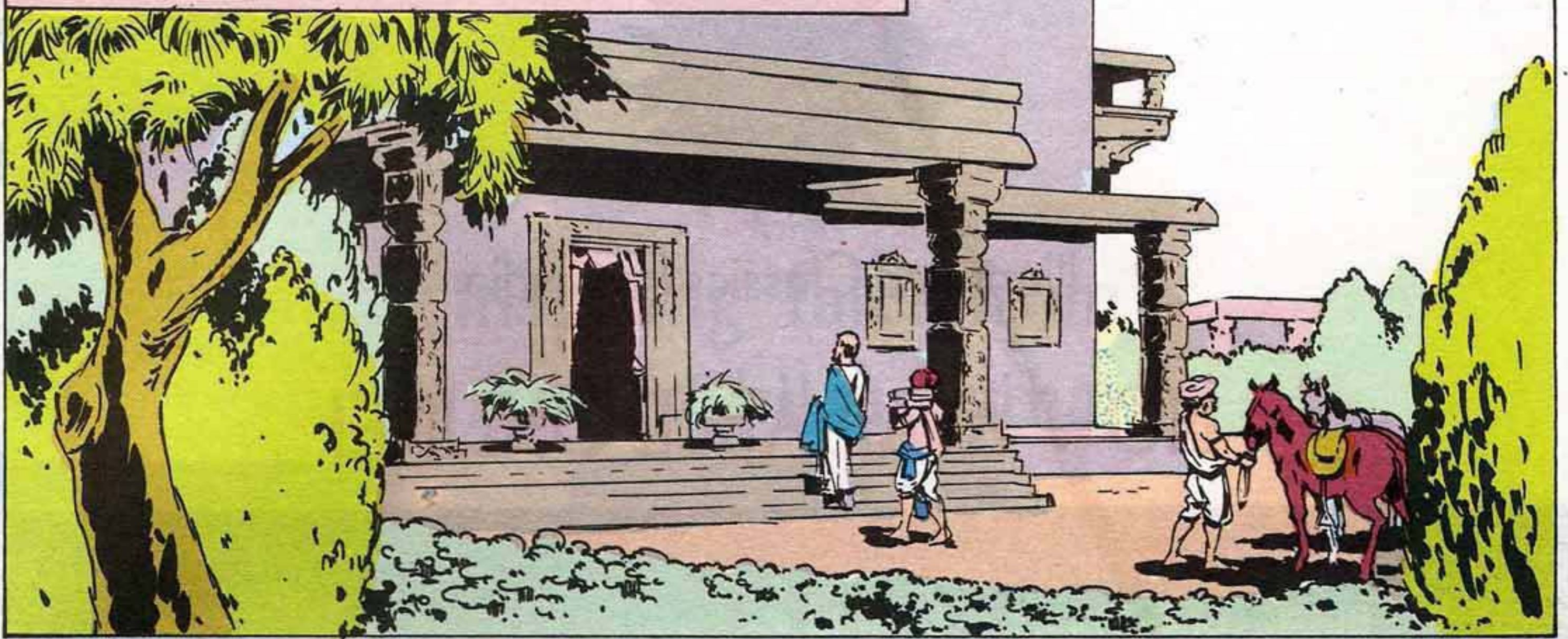
AT THE SEAPORT OF SURPARAKA**



*Parts of present-day Tamil Nadu. + Tamraparni, Sri Lanka of today.

**Modern Sopara on the Western Coast.

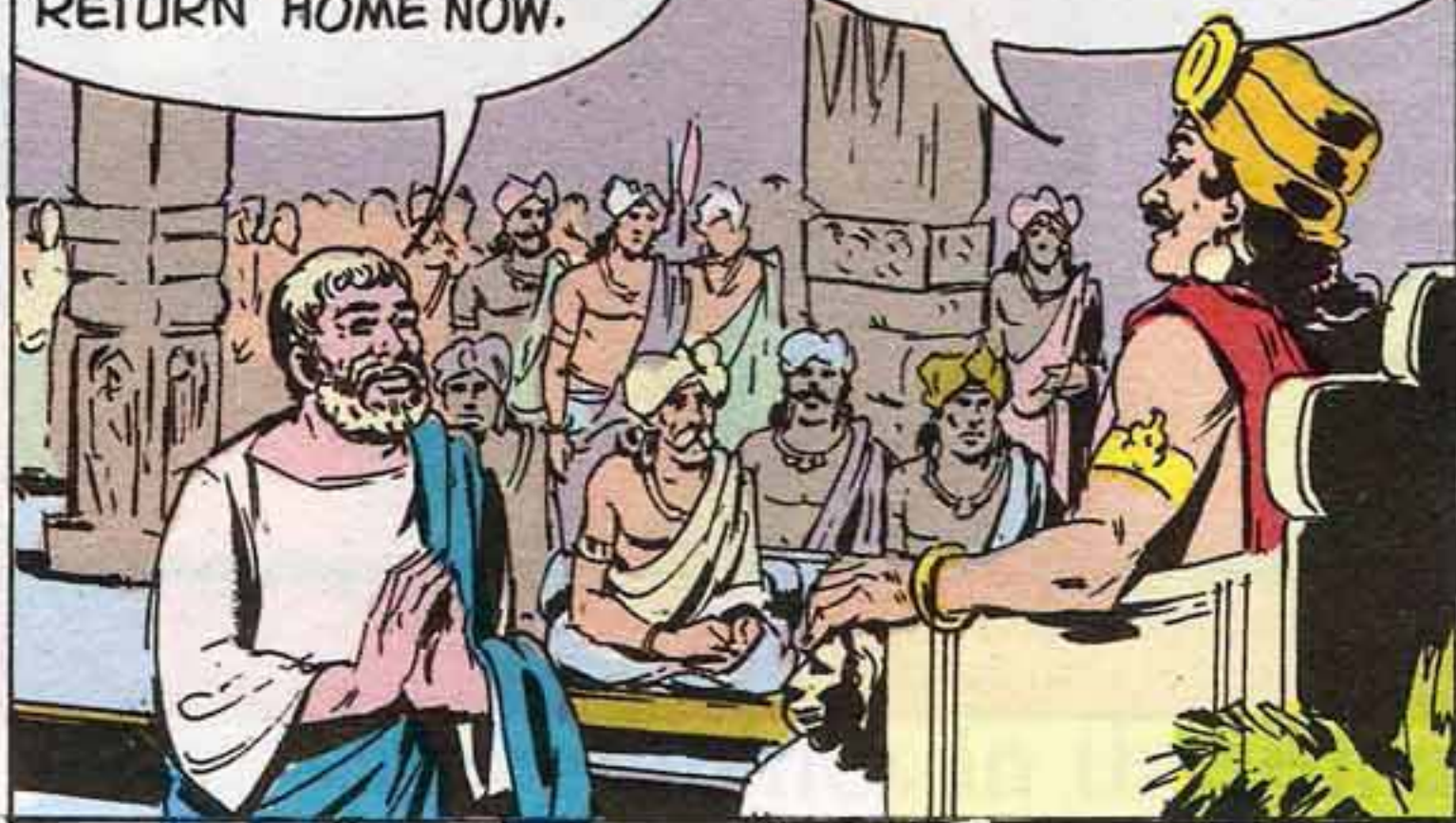
MEGASTHENES RETURNED IN DUE COURSE TO PATALIPUTRA.



HE THEN WENT TO CHANDRAGUPTA TO BID HIM GOODBYE.

FAREWELL, O KING. MY TENURE IN INDIA IS OVER. I WISH TO RETURN HOME NOW.

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED YOUR STAY WITH US. GIVE MY REGARDS TO KING SELEUCUS.



FINALLY, HE BADE GOODBYE TO THE SERVANT.

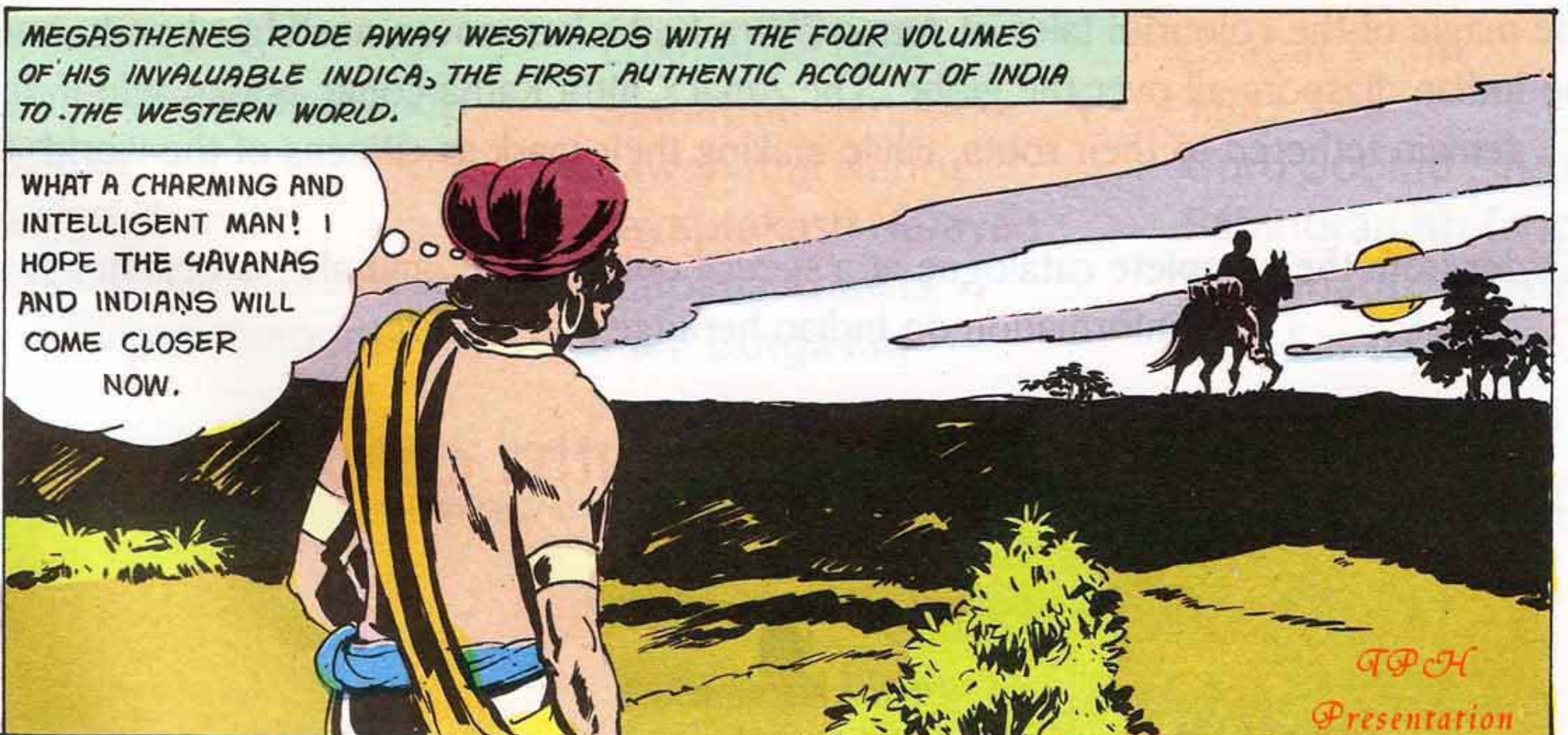
GOODBYE AND THANK YOU. YOU HAVE BEEN A WONDERFUL COMPANION.

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, SIR, I WAS ASKED TO SPY ON YOU.



MEGASTHENES RODE AWAY WESTWARDS WITH THE FOUR VOLUMES OF HIS INVALUABLE INDICA, THE FIRST AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF INDIA TO THE WESTERN WORLD.

WHAT A CHARMING AND INTELLIGENT MAN! I HOPE THE YAVANAS AND INDIANS WILL COME CLOSER NOW.



TPH
Presentation



Illustrated Classics From India

Megasthenes

Megasthenes was among the first foreigners to have visited India in historical times and given an eyewitness account of conditions prevailing in this country during the 4th century B.C. He was the ambassador of Seleucus Nicator at the court of Chandragupata Maurya and he had the opportunity to travel extensively in the country and observe closely the proceedings at the royal court, various aspects of military and civil administration, the geography to the country, the social and economic conditions of the people and the political institutions. He put down his observations in four volumes entitled 'Indica'.

'Indica' in its original form has now been lost, but some later writers like Diodorus, Pliny, Strabo and Arrian have quoted from the work. Barring the few instances where Megasthenes had to rely on hearsay, his account of India is highly valued for its accuracy and authenticity.

This story of Megasthenes is adapted from his own account of the India of his times, and the sequence of events in our narration has been modified for coherence and lucidity while maintaining the accuracy of historical records.

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